The Opening of the Silk Road (丝绸之路的开通)

Zhang Yiping

VISIT...

Hanban

Zang Yiping

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张一平 著

ROADS TO THE WORLD

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Foreword

It has been a long and exciting history of tremendous cultural exchange between China and other countries. In terms of culture, economy, ideology, and personnel, these exchanges between China and other countries can be dated back to the times of Qin and Han dynasties—directly or indirectly, by land or sea. The long-term and multi-faceted cultural exchange helps the world to understand more about China and the rest of the world, enriching the common wealth of mankind—both materially and spiritually.

The book series entitled *Roads to the World* offers the most splendid stories in the entire history of Sino-foreign cultural exchange. We hereby offer them to foreign students learning the Chinese language, and to foreign readers who have a keen interest in Chinese culture. These stories depict important personalities, events, and phenomena in various fields of cultural exchange between China and other nations, and among different peoples. By reading the books, you may understand China and Chinese civilization profoundly, and the close link between Chinese civilization and other civilizations of the world. The books highlight the efforts and contributions of Chinese people and Chinese civilization in the world's cultural interchange. They reflect mankind's common spiritual pursuit and the orientation of values.

This book tells the story of Zhang Qian, an explorer in the Han Dynasty of China, who adventured to the Western Region twice and opened the worldly-renowned Silk Road. Zhang Qian was the first to open the gate to the Western Region, and the Silk Road that he pioneered ushered in a new era in economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West. This brave and dedicated explorer and diplomat has made a permanent mark on the history of Sino-foreign

cultural exchange.

前　言

中国与其他国家、民族之间的文化交流具有悠久而曲折的历史。在中国与外国之间，通过间接的和直接的、陆路的和海路的、有形的和无形的多种渠道，各种文化、经济、思想、人员方面的交流，可以上溯至秦汉时代，下及于当今社会。长期的、多方面的交流，增进了中国与其他国家、民族之间的了解，使人类的共同财富（物质的和精神的）更加丰富。

中外文化交流故事丛书（Roads to the World）的宗旨，是从中外文化交流的历史长河中，选择那些最璀璨的明珠，通过讲故事的方式，介绍给学习汉语的外国学生和对中国文化感兴趣的外国读者。这些故事描述中国与其他国家、民族在各个领域文化交流中的重要人物、事件和现象，以使外国读者能够更深入地理解中国，理解中国文明，理解中国文明与其他各文明之间的密切关系，以及中国人和中国文明在这种交流过程中所作出的努力和贡献，并尽力彰显人类共同的精神追求与价值取向。

本书讲述的是中国汉代张骞两次出使西域，打通举世闻名的丝绸之路的历险故事。张骞第一个打开了西域的大门，由他开拓的丝绸之路，开启了东西经济文化交流的新时代。这位勇敢而富有献身精神的探险家和外交家书写了中西文化交流史上最生动传奇的一页。

I

No Spring Breeze Goes through Yumen Pass

The Origins of Silk

蚕母娘娘，本名嫘祖，是黄帝的妻子。她是蚕桑业的发明者，因而被奉为蚕桑业的保护神。

Mother of Silkworms, whose original name was Lei Zu, was the Yellow Emperor's wife. She was regarded as the patron saint of silkworm breeding and mulberry growing industry.

The process of growing mulberry trees, raising silkworms, and weaving raw silk threads into silk fabric was a great invention of the ancient Chinese people. The history of making raw silk into clothing goes back about 5,000 years. As early as the later Neolithic Age, the people of the Yellow River basin and the lower Yangtze River had

already learned how to produce silk thread, ribbons, and a type of thin, tough silk material called *juan*.

There are many beautiful legends about the origin of silk that have been passed down by the Chinese people. One of them says that 4,000 years ago, when the Chinese ancestor Yellow Emperor was a tribal leader, he once held a victory celebration. During the celebration, a beautiful girl appeared out of thin air, holding bright and shining bundles of yellow and silver silk threads in her hands. To the Yellow Emperor's great joy, she presented the silk to him, and he immediately had it woven into a light and soft thin silk. From then on, the girl bearing the silk was reverently referred to as "silkworm spirit." Another well-known legend also involves the Yellow Emperor. It says that his imperial concubine Lei Zu discovered silk. It wasn't until she taught people to pull raw silk out of silkworm cocoons that the production of silk gradually began to flourish in China...

By the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), the silk industry had progressed a step further. It is said that Emperor Wu of Han, when inspecting his vast empire, used one million *pi* of silk (*pi* is a unit for measuring silk, one of which is equal to 23 meters) as rewards for his local officials. His taking that much silk all at once to give to subordinates demonstrates just how much the silk industry thrived in China in those days. Among the relics unearthed at the Han Tombs at the Mawangdui site near Changsha, there are over 100 silk goods, including a robe of 128 centimeters in length that weighs only 49 grams. Another piece of silk cloth is 49 centimeters wide and 450 centimeters long, and only weighs 2.8 grams. The superb craftsmanship of the silk is astounding.

Fine silk did not just influence the lives of the ancient Chinese people; it also received great recognition across the world. Before Chinese silk emerged in Europe, clothing in Greece and Rome was primarily made of wool and flax. One can imagine people's wonder and joy upon first touching the soft, shiny, and colorful Chinese silk. When Chinese silk was first passed on to the West, people there

regarded it as the finest clothing material. With a high manufacturing cost to begin with, plus a merchant monopoly and all the taxes imposed upon it as it passed through countries, by the time it was sold in Europe, silk was more expensive than gold. Even in the city of Rome, the political and economic center of Europe at the time, only a small number of aristocrats and high-class women could afford to wear silk. Therefore, wearing silk became a way to show off one's wealth and position. It is said that, in the Roman Empire, one hundred million *sestertii* (the currency unit of ancient Rome) was spent on silk every year, accounting for half of all of the total goods imported into the empire each year. Such an enormous amount of financial pressure caused Westerners in those days to exert much energy trying to come up with a method for producing silk from silkworms. However, their final mastery of this technique was actually the result of transmission from China, through Hotan in Xinjiang to South Asia, then Central Asia and West Asia and the various countries of Europe.

In approximately the third century BC, the Greeks were already referring to China as "Seres," meaning "the place of silk production" or "silk peddlers." In his book *Naturalis Historia*, which was a great encyclopedic collection of Roman knowledge in that day, Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) included an account of silk from Seres, which today reads as pure myth:

"The Seres are famous for the wool that is found in their forests. They collect this white down from the leaves of the trees, and then steep it in water. Finally it is the job of the women to wind the threads (coiling them into the rolls of a certain shape), and then spin them (spinning the silk thread on to a spindle with a wooden spinning wheel). It is only by such complex techniques that those distant regions can produce such dazzling and resplendent products, enabling aristocratic Roman women to flaunt themselves in public in their transparent finery."

Remnants of Chinese silk clothing were discovered on a body buried in a tomb from 500 BC in Stuttgart, Germany. On the Crimean

Peninsula, more Chinese silk was unearthed. Judging by the script on the other articles found at the same site, that silk is said to date back to the third century BC Such articles indicate that, even before Zhang Qian (approximately 164-114 BC) reached the Western Region, silk had already been transported to the West, and the road established by the interaction and circulation of Eastern and Western people and goods was already in existence.

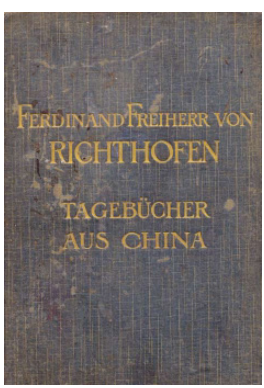
In Greece, a great number of carvings and pottery painted with human figures have been preserved. Due to the thin, transparent clothing depicted on these figures, some believe that Chinese silk was already the preferred clothing for those belonging to the upper echelons of Greek society in the 5th century BC. For instance, images of goddesses such as those of the Parthenon (dated from 438 to 431 BC), the Erechtheion Karyatids, and late archaic female figures (*korai*) from the Athenian Acropolis (dated from 530 to 510 BC) are all clad in soft, thin, transparent robes, all of which were made of Chinese silk. Similar silk clothing can be found in Greek paintings, particularly in the third century BC Greek painting on ivory "The Judgment of Paris," which perfectly depicts the fine, thin clothing worn by the goddesses, the transparent silk that completely exposes the goddesses' breasts and navels.

All of this indicates that, even prior to the opening of the Silk Road, pathways for interchange between Europe and Asia were already in existence. These pathways crossed through the wilderness and desert areas with practically no signs of life. These paths emerged as the result of the merchants seeking fortunes and the traversing nomadic peoples treading upon the ground. Today, we have no way of restoring the pathways' exact direction or location; we can only draw a rough sketch based on scattered archaeological and historical data. However, we can be sure that these early pathways formed the infant stage of the Silk Road to come later. And so now, let us take a look at this mysterious thoroughfare connecting Asia and Europe.

Emperor Wu of Han

Emperor Wu of Han (157-87 BC) was an emperor and statesman of the Western Han Dynasty. His personal name was Liu Che, his style name was Liu Tong, and he was the seventh emperor of the Han Dynasty. He was the tenth son of Emperor Jing of Han (Liu Qi), the grandson of Emperor Wen of Han (Liu Heng), and great-grandson of Emperor Gao of Han (Liu Bang). At the age of four, he was crowned the king of Jiaodong, and then made heir apparent at the age of seven. He ascended to the throne at the age of 16, and reigned for 54 years (141-87 BC). He was responsible for the greatest achievements of the Western Han. He was a bold and visionary leader, and his cultural and military achievements caused the Han Dynasty to become the strongest nation in the world in its day. Because of this, he is known as one of the greatest emperors in Chinese history.

Where East Met West: The Western Region



德国地理学家李希霍芬的著作，他第一次为丝绸之路命名。

China, the Results of My Travels and the Studies Based Thereon, by Ferdinand von

Richthofen, who named "the Silk Road" for the very first time.

What kind of route did silk go through to reach the West? The answer to this question is slowly being revealed. In 1877, in his book entitled *China*, German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen gave the name Seidenstrasse (Silk Road) to the silk trade route that was opened up over nearly two and a half centuries between 114 BC and 127 AD and which connected China through the Western Region with the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers area of Central Asia, and with India. In other words, he regarded the Western Region explored by Western Han official Zhang Qian on his diplomatic mission as the starting point of the Silk Road. In 1910, in his book *The Ancient Silk Road between China and Syria*, another German named Albert Herrmann said that the scope of the Silk Road concept ought to be extended all the way to Syria with its opening to the distant west. Syria was one of the larger markets for Chinese raw silk, and it was mainly by the land route that they got their raw silk from distant China.

The Silk Road was an ancient, extensive trade route. It was also the main artery connecting the three continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa. It ran through ancient China, Afghanistan, India, the area of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and passed through the Mediterranean Sea to reach Rome. Among those who traveled along this road, in addition to merchants busily chasing profits and freely wandering travelers, there were also messengers sent on diplomatic missions and disciples of religions on pilgrimages to holy lands. During times of war, many refugees and soldiers also traveled along various stretches of the path. One can imagine what a magnificent sight it must have been, all of the people with very different appearances at different times in history all hustling along this same road. Frequent trading and exchanging allowed the peoples of this area the opportunity for mutual understanding. This great road also became a historical heritage common to all of them. From the 2nd

century BC to around the 13th or 14th centuries AD, silk was an important tie that connected the ancient origins of civilizations on earth, including China, India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and ancient Greece.

In historical Chinese documents, the geographical range of the Western Region, which was a crucial part of the Silk Road, varies in different periods. At its largest, this geographical concept referred to a vast area with Jiayu Guan as its easternmost point, all the way to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. At its smallest, it only referred to the 36 states of the "Western Region," or today's southern Xinjiang. Therefore people used the term Western Region in a broad sense and a narrow sense to refer to the former and the latter areas. It wasn't until the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911), after the Emperor Qianlong (Aisin Gioro Hongli, who reigned from 1736-1796) suppressed the Zungar rebellion, that they gave the collective name of the Western Region to southern Xinjiang and the area north of Tianshan Mountains to the south and east of Balkhash Lake.

The 36 States of the Western Region

When Zhang Qian was sent on a mission to the Western Regions in 139 BC, 36 states already existed within that area. The 36 states of the ancient "Western Region," according to historical documents, were roughly located in the modern-day locations of: Wusun, Qiuci, Yanqi, Khotan, Ruoqiang, Loulan, Qiemo (Cherchen), Xiaoyuan, Ronglu, Yumi, Qulei, Pishan, Xiye, Puli, Yinai, Shule, Shache (Yarkand), Yutou, Wensu, Yuli, Gumo, Beilu, Wutanzi, Beiluhouguo, Danhuan, Pulei, Puleihouguo, Western Qiemi, Eastern Qiemi, Jieguo, Huhu, Shanguo, Cheshiqianguo, Cheshihouguo, Cheshiyuduguo, and Cheshihouchengguo.

Even though a passageway between the East and West had already emerged prior to the Han Dynasty, sections of it were

frequently blocked due to the clashes and wars between peoples and countries, keeping the road from prosperity and continuity. In addition to such hindrances caused by man, the road ran among mountains and rivers, at times in very remote areas. The road was dangerous and the way, at times, treacherous. It wasn't until the second century AD, that the eastern section of this thoroughfare through Asia was guaranteed to be unhindered, unleashing an unprecedented platform for prosperity. This change was due to Zhang Qian having finished his epic-like exploratory mission to Central Asia and the Han Dynasty government having implemented effective management techniques in the Western Region and establishing friendly relations with countries west of the Pamirs. All of this was attained after breaking through the isolation of the Xiongnu (Hun).

The Xiongnu Barrier

The Han Dynasty was a time of economic prosperity in China, and the country was entering a great era. The booming economy led to an increase in population, and the Han people began to expand south, reaching beyond the Yangtze River. They assimilated the native inhabitants of the areas, and slowly but surely developed the Pearl River basin and previously uninhabitable areas. In the north, there was no new area for the Han people to expand into. The impenetrable Great Wall could only ensure that their territory would no longer be swallowed up, and that their border would not be pushed south. The north was constantly harassed by the Xiongnu, the enemy of the Han. The physical strength and wild nature of the Xiongnu grew by the day as they nibbled away at the northern Han border, and the watchtower guards often had to send warnings to the capital in Chang'an. The situation was exacerbated by two factors. First, in the late years of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), starting in the year 210 BC, defense of the Great Wall region had already started to slacken. This was because the

imperial government had given the Great Wall to prisoners in exile to defend, and the discipline of that group was extremely lax. Second, when the Qin Dynasty was on the brink of collapsing, in the year 209 BC, or three years before the establishment of the Han Dynasty, a new Xiongnu regime was establishing itself as leader of a unified and fearsome country.

This ancient northern nomadic people group, under the leadership of Modun, achieved unification for the first time. Modun had previously been held hostage by the Da Yuezhi, and after escaping, he killed his father and became the new leader of the Xiongnu. He occupied the Mongolian highlands, had a cavalry ten thousand strong, and relentlessly attacked neighboring tribes, expanding his steppe empire in almost every direction. The Yuezhi, who were similar to the Xiongnu both in terms of race and lifestyle, had already started moving west. After defeating the Yuezhi monarch in battle, according to their custom, the Xiongnu leader cut off their enemy's head and used it as a drinking vessel, from which they all drank to their heart's content. Not only did the Xiongnu invade and capture the Da Yuezhi, they also conquered more than twenty small states in the Western Region such as Loulan and occupied the Hetao region, which was Han territory. In the year 200 BC, this led the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty Liu Bang (reigned 206-195 BC) to launch a large-scale military operation against the Xiongnu, which ended, however, in defeat for the Han. Unable to beat the Xiongnu in battle, the Han adopted a new policy to obtain security for its borders by giving royal women to Xiongnu leadership in marriage. As part of the agreement under this policy, each year the Han Dynasty would give multiple gifts to the Xiongnu, and every few years would also give a princess to the Chanyu (the title for the top Xiongnu leader) to be his wife. Demands for gifts grew all the time, and as many as ten thousand gifts of silk fabric and silk goods were given. Paying such a high price, however, did not secure peace for the Han borders. The Xiongnu continued to cross borders and attack just as before, and Han

people living on the borders continued to experience bloodshed and loss of life.

It was the custom of the Xiongnu that whoever chopped off the head of an enemy would be rewarded with a cup of liquor, and would have the right to keep whatever he gained in battle. This rule encouraged looting among Xiongnu warriors. Their seemingly insatiable greed and untiring spirit, together with their militarized lifestyle, turned them into the fearsome rivals of all the neighboring clans and countries. In fighting the Xiongnu, countless Han soldiers were lost, killed, or wounded, creating an extremely fearful atmosphere.

In addition to all of this, the Han military law was brutal and severe. Not only would defeated military leaders be put to death upon returning from battle, but the emperor would also punish generals who surrendered to or were captured by the Xiongnu by putting their family members to death. As a result of the first order, defeated Han generals went into hiding, never to pick up a weapon or ride into battle again. They often either ended their lives by committing suicide or surrendered to the enemy to be in their service. As a result of the second order, as soon as the generals were captured, the emperor would persecute their families. Therefore, all that the surviving generals could think of was taking revenge, and began serving the enemy. Clearly these were unwise policies, eventually causing a great number of Han generals to turn their backs on and even fight against the Han Dynasty together with the Xiongnu.

The Xiongnu

The Xiongnu were nomadic people who lived on the Eurasian Continent in ancient days, and included the historical Chinese Rong and Di peoples. During the 3rd century BC, the Xiongnu at one time occupied a vast territory from the Caspian Sea to the Great wall, including the large area that is modern day Mongolia.

Beginning in the Western Zhou (1046-771 BC), the Xiongnu began threatening the dynasties of the Central Plains. After 771 AD, the Quanrong tribe captured Gaojing, and drove King Ping east. During the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), the Xiongnu repeatedly invaded the state of Zhao, and it was King Wuling of Zhao to begin emulating the Xiongnu way of dress and battle, with archers on horseback. Zhao's general Li Mu once even crushed the Xiongnu in battle. The First Emperor of Qin (reigned from 246-209BC) then ordered General Meng Tian to beat the Xiongnu in the North to recapture Hetao Area. But no real, full-scale war against the Xiongnu took place until many years into the Han Dynasty, after the adoption of the Marriage Policy (a pacification strategy in which a Han princess was given to a Xiongnu king in marriage). Around the year 70 BC, the Han launched a large-scale retaliation against the Xiongnu, capturing the Hexi Corridor, which was the richest and most populous area at the time. They pushed the Xiongnu further north into what is modern day Mongolia, and the Xiongnu retreated into the Western Region. In 36 BC, Chen Tang killed Xiongnu leader Zhizhi Shanyu in an area 4,000 miles from Chang'an in modern day Afghanistan, and set up an administrative body in the Western Region. In the year 48 AD, the Xiongnu split up into two tribes, with the Southern Xiongnu heading south toward the Han, and the Northern Xiongnu settling north of the Gobi desert. The Southern Xiongnu later joined with the Han to attack the Northern Xiongnu, forcing them to move west. The Northern Xiongnu disappeared from historical Chinese texts at that point. After the massacres and assimilation that occurred during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), the Southern Xiongnu also vanished into history.

The Dream of Emperor Wu of Han

The Xiongnu continually plagued Han Dynasty rulers. In the early days of the dynasty, they put forth great efforts in pursuit of peace, but the harsh demands of the Xiongnu were too much to swallow. After more than 60 years of striving toward progress, when Emperor Wu of Han became the seventh emperor of the dynasty, China had entered a time of prosperity. The country was extremely strong, industry and the economy were booming, the population was growing, and the well-trained military was powerful. The Han Empire at this time was strong enough to send expeditions into the hinterlands of Asia, and set up an all-new, fully-equipped and extra-long northern line of defense. They established new territories, and promoted the development of trade between the East and West along a line that was to be called the Silk Road by coming generations.

Just as Emperor Wu of Han was scheming and preparing to attack the Xiongnu, he received some important intelligence: The Xiongnu chief had been killed by the king of the rival tribe Da Yuezhi, who then used the Xiongnu chief's skull as a drinking vessel. The Da Yuezhi was originally a nomadic people residing in what is now the Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province. After being defeated by the Xiongnu, they were forced to move westward, settling in the Yili River Valley at the northern foot of the Tianshan Mountains, before moving further southwest later. The new Yuezhi king despised the Xiongnu and wanted to get revenge for what they had done. When Emperor Wu of Han and his aides received the information, they wanted to make the most of the new situation by uniting with the Yuezhi. By acting together against the Xiongnu, they could put the Xiongnu at a disadvantage and have a stronger chance of beating them.

It was the perfect opportunity to turn the situation around. Emperor Wu of Han figured out a plan to attack the Xiongnu from both sides. He laid out the plan to send troops to join forces with the Yuezhi before his top officials when holding court one day, asking

them to discuss the plan's feasibility. Everyone joined in the discussion, and there was a general agreement that the idea was tempting, and in principle, the correct thing to do. However, not only would carrying out the plan be extremely difficult, but the outcome was also uncertain. But Emperor Wu of Han was unshaken in his belief that nothing was ever certain in the beginning, and if the plan made sense, they could come up with a way to implement it. He sent over a hundred volunteer soldiers to the West to complete out this precarious mission, with Zhang Qian as their leader.

陕西榆林出土的汉代贵族墓石刻，再现了西汉与匈奴大战的场面。
A tombstone carving of the Han Dynasty nobles unearthed in Yulin, Shaanxi Province, reproducing the scene of the great war between the Western Han Dynasty and the Xiongnu.

The Da Yuezhi

The Da Yuezhi was a nomadic tribe that resided in the northwestern part of China prior to the second century BC, and then migrated to Central Asia. Pre-Qin Dynasty Chinese texts also refer to the tribe as Yuzhi, Yushi, Niushi, among other names, and they were also later called the Yuezhi. The Chinese character for

yue is the classical form of the character *rou*, meaning meat or flesh, and the character now pronounced *shi* was originally pronounced *zhi*. From the 5th century BC to the 2nd century AD, the Yuezhi people roamed the area from the Zhangye in the western part of the Hexi Corridor to Dunhuang. A powerful and formidable group, they were enemies of the Xiongnu. Just before the year 177 BC, the Yuezhi defeated another small nomadic tribe near Dunhuang called the Wusun, killing their king and capturing their land, causing the tribe to run away to the Xiongnu. Between 177 BC and 176 BC, the Xiongnu king Modun Chanyu crushed the Yuezhi by sending the Wise King of the Right against them. In 174 BC, the successive Xiongnu leader Laoshang Chanyu also defeated the Yuezhi, killing their king and using his head a drinking vessel. The majority of the Yuezhi people fled to the Yili River Valley and Lake Issyk area. A number of Yuezhi people remained in the Hexi Corridor and intermixed with the Qiang people who lived in the Qilian Mountains. They were thereafter referred to as Xiao Yuezhi, while those who moved west are called Da Yuezhi. Between the years 139 BC to 129 BC, the Wusun king Liejiaomi came of age. To avenge the death of his father, he led troops west to attack the Da Yuezhi, seizing land such as the Yili River Valley. The Da Yuezhi were once again forced to move south, beyond Dayuan, settling on the northern banks of the Amu Darya River. In the early years of the 1st century BC, the Da Yuezhi conquered Bactria (Daxia) south of the Amu Darya River, and until the beginning of the 1st century AD, they established a great empire called Guishuang (Kushan). The two migrations of the Da Yuezhi people greatly influenced the history of the Central Asian region. Together they brought about the extinction of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, prompted the Saka people to invade the northern India, and induced Emperor Wu of Han to send Zhang Qian to the Western Regions, which in turn led to the opening of the Silk Road.

1

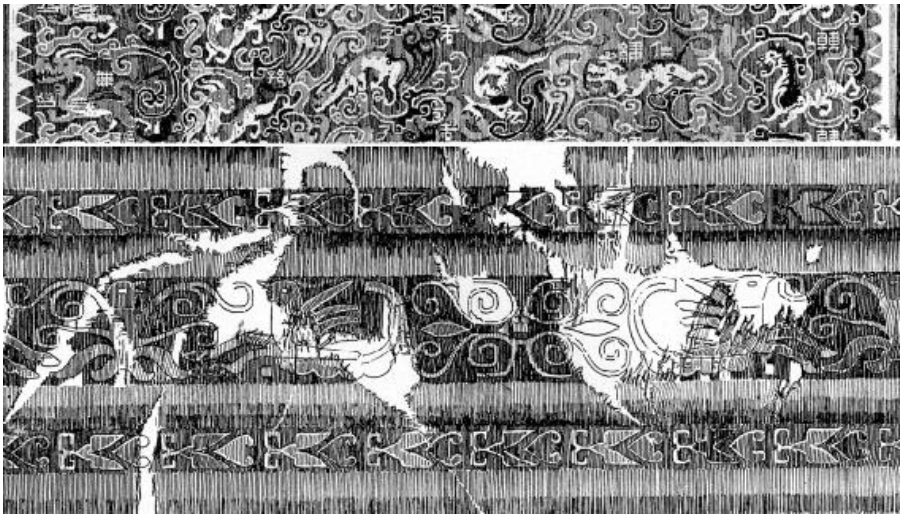
春风不度玉门关

丝绸的故乡

植桑、养蚕和利用蚕丝织造丝绸，是古代中国人的伟大发明。利用蚕丝作为衣料的历史，到现在大概有5000年了。早在新石器时代晚期，黄河流域和长江下游地区的人们，已经学会制造丝线、丝带和绢（一种薄而坚韧的丝织物）。

中国古代绢画——《采桑养蚕图》
An ancient Chinese silk painting entitled "Mulberry Leaves and Silkworms."

关于最早的丝，在中国民间流传着不少美丽的传说。相传在4000多年以前，中国人的祖先黄帝做部落首领的时候，有一次举办庆功会，一位美丽的姑娘从天而降，手捧着两束分别为黄色和银色的光泽鲜亮的蚕丝，将其献给了黄帝。黄帝非常高兴，立刻派人把它织成了又轻又软的细绢。后来，这位献丝的姑娘被人们尊为“蚕神”。另外一个著名的传说也与黄帝有关，说的是他的妃子嫘祖首先发现了蚕丝，并把养蚕缫丝（从蚕茧抽出蚕丝）的方法传授给人民，中国的蚕丝生产才逐渐兴盛起来……



斯坦因20世纪初在丝路古道上发现的中国古代丝织物

A piece of ancient Chinese silk found by Stein on the Silk Road in early 20th century.

1972年湖南长沙马王堆1号汉墓出土的帛画，用三幅棕色细绢拼合而成。

A silk painting unearthed in 1972 from No.1 Han Dynasty Tomb of Mawangdui in Hunan

Province, a combination of three pieces of brown thin silk.

到了汉代（前206—公元220），丝织业进一步发展。据说，汉武帝在视察他幅员辽阔的帝国时，用了100万匹（匹是纺织品的计量单位，汉代一匹约为23米）帛（丝织品）作为对地方官员的赏赐。他一下子拿出这么多丝绸来赏赐下属，可见当时中国丝绸业的繁盛。1972年在长沙马王堆汉墓出土的文物中，仅丝织品就多达100多件，其中一件素纱单衣，长128厘米，重仅49克；另一块宽49厘米、长450厘米的纱料，只有2.8克重，制丝技术之高超，令人惊叹。

精美的丝绸不仅在古代中国人的生活中产生重大影响，在国际上也获得极高的声誉。中国丝绸未传入欧洲前，希腊、罗马人做衣服的主要原料是羊毛和亚麻。不难想象他们触摸到轻柔光亮、色彩绚丽的中国丝绸时的惊奇和喜悦。在中国丝绸西传之初，它被西方人视为最上等的衣料。生产成本高昂，再加上商人垄断经营、沿途各国关卡收取重税等原因，丝绸运到欧洲已贵比黄金。因此，即使当时作为欧洲政治、经济中心的罗马城，也只有少数贵族和上层妇女才能穿得上丝绸，并以此炫耀自己的财富和地位。据说，罗马帝国为购买丝绸，每年约支出1亿赛斯太斯（古罗马货币单位），占当时罗马帝国每年商品进口总额的一半。巨大的财政压力使当时的西方人绞尽脑汁，想尽快掌握养蚕缫丝的方法，而他们最终掌握这项技术，还是养蚕方法通过中国新疆的和田传播到南亚、中亚、西亚和欧洲各国的结果。

家蚕和蚕茧
Silkworms and cocoons.

大约在公元前3世纪时，希腊人已经把中国称作“赛里斯国”。“赛里斯”是蚕丝产地或贩卖丝绢人的意思。普林尼（23—79）所写的《博物志》，是集当时罗马人知识之大成的百科全书式作品，其中有关于赛里斯国和丝绸的叙述，在今天看来也只能当作天方夜谭似的神话：

“赛里斯人以他们的森林里盛产毛织品著名。他们从树叶中采取白绒丝，然后加入水，最后由妇女们承担络丝（把丝线转绕成一定形状的筒子）和纺线（用木制纺车将丝线纺成线锭）的任务。正是由于采取了这样复杂的技术，才从那样遥远的地方生产出了这种琳琅满目、绚丽多彩的产品，使罗马贵妇们身着透明的服装在社交场合抛头露面。”

在德国的斯图加特，人们从一座公元前500年的古墓中，发现了墓中人身上有中国丝绸衣服的残片。另外，在克里米亚半岛也有中国丝绸出土，从同时出土的其他器物上的文字看，是公元前3世纪的东西。这些实物表明，早在张骞（约前164—前114）通西域之前，丝绸就已运往西方了，而且东西方人流、物流开辟的道路也已经存在了。

在希腊，有大量的雕刻和陶器彩绘人像被保存下来，由于他们所穿的衣服细薄透明，因而有人推测，在公元前5世纪，中国丝绸已经成为希腊上层人物喜爱的服装。例如，巴特农神庙的命运女神（前438—前431年的作品）、埃里契西翁的加里亚蒂和雅可波里斯的科莱（前530—前510年的作品）等女神像，都穿着透明长袍，胸披薄绢，衣料柔软，都是用中国的丝绸做成的。希腊绘画中也有类似的丝质衣料，特别是公元前3世纪希腊制作的象牙版上的绘画“波利斯的裁判”，将希腊女神身上穿著的纤细衣料表现得更是完美，透明的丝质罗纱将女神的乳房、脐

眼完全显露出来。

汉武帝

汉武帝刘彻（前157—前87），字通，汉朝第七位皇帝，西汉时期的皇帝、政治家。汉武帝是汉景帝刘启的第十个儿子、汉文帝刘恒的孙子、汉高帝刘邦的曾孙。汉武帝四岁时被册立为胶东王，七岁时被册立为太子，16岁登基，在位54年（前141—前87），建立了西汉王朝最辉煌的功业。他的雄才大略、文治武功使汉朝成为当时世界上最强大的国家，他也因此成为了中国历史上伟大的皇帝。

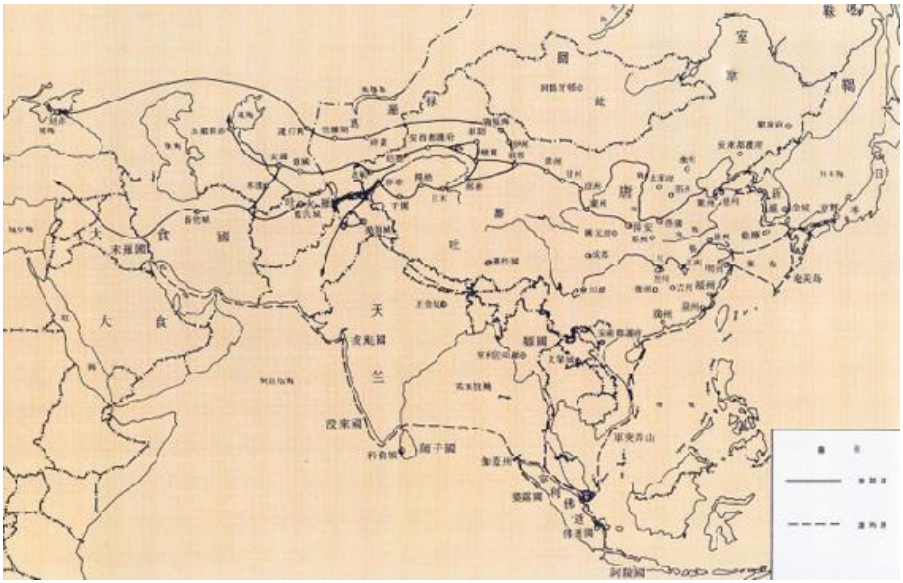
这一切都表明，早在丝绸之路开通以前，亚欧之间已经有了一些交流往来的通道。这些通过荒原沙漠的道路，几乎看不到人烟，是由那些不辞辛劳的商人或来去匆匆的游牧民族走出来的。现在人们已经不可能复原它们的确切走向和所经地点，只能依靠零散的考古和文献资料勾勒出大概的轮廓。但我们可以肯定，这些早期的通道形成了后来丝绸之路的雏形。接下来，让我们来看一看，这条连接亚洲和欧洲的神秘通道。

亚欧枢纽：西域

精美的丝绸是经过怎样的路线运达西方的呢？这个谜底慢慢被揭开了。1877年，德国地理学家李希霍芬在他的著作《中国》一书中，把公元前114年至公元127年近两个半世纪间开辟的，经西域将中国与中亚的阿姆河—锡尔河地区以及印度连接起来的丝绸贸易道路，命名为Seidenstrassen，英文名为Silk Road。也就是说，他将西汉大臣张骞出使西域作为丝绸之路的发端。1910年，另一个德国人阿尔伯特·赫尔曼在他著名的《中国和叙利亚之间的古代丝绸之路》中认为，应该把丝绸之路的含义进一步延伸到通向遥远西方的叙利亚。叙利亚是中国生丝较大的市场之一，主要通过陆路从遥远的中国获得生丝。

着华服的李希霍芬和家人
Ferdinand von Richthofen in Chinese costume and his family.

丝绸之路是一条古老而漫长的商路，也是连接亚、欧、非三大洲的动脉，它贯穿古代中国、阿富汗、印度、阿姆河—锡尔河地区、伊朗、伊拉克、叙利亚、土耳其，通过地中海到达罗马。来往于这条道路的，既有忙碌的逐利商人、自由自在的旅行者，也有受命于国王出使远方的使者，还有前往宗教圣地朝圣的虔诚教徒。动乱年代，大量的难民、军人也曾经走在丝路的某一段。我们可以想象，在不同时代，风貌各异的人们熙熙攘攘地走在这条路上，该是多么壮观的情景。频繁的贸易和交流使这些地区的人民有机会相互了解，这条伟大的道路也成为他们共同的历史遗产。从公元前2世纪到公元13、14世纪前后，丝路是连接世界古代文明发祥地，包括中国、印度、两河流域、埃及以及古希腊、罗马的重要纽带。



丝绸之路古地图
A sketch map of the Silk Road.

西域三十六国

公元前139年张骞出使西域时，“西域”曾先后存在有36个国家。至于古代“西域”三十六国现在的地方，按历史资料，大致应是：乌孙、龟兹、焉耆、于阗、若羌、楼兰、且末、小宛、戎卢、扜弥、渠勒、皮山、西夜、蒲犁、依耐、疏勒、莎车、尉头、温宿、尉犁、姑墨、卑陆、乌贪訾、卑陆后国、单桓、蒲类、蒲类后国、西且弥、东且弥、劫国、狐胡、山国、车师前国、车师后国、车师尉都国、车师后城国。

在中国古代文献中，作为丝绸之路关键路段的西域，在不同的历史时期，其地理范围并不一样。这个地理概念所指的范围，最大时，包括了嘉峪关以西直到地中海沿岸的广大地区；最小时，只指西域三十六国，即今新疆南疆地区。所以大家一般又把前者作为广义的西域，后者作为狭义的西域。到了清代（1616—1911），在乾隆皇帝（爱新觉罗·弘历，1736—1796年在位）平定准噶尔叛乱以后，才把新疆南疆地区与巴尔喀什湖以东以南的天山以北地区合称西域。

尽管在中国汉代以前东西方的通道已经出现，但是这条道路却常常

因一些民族或国家间的纠纷和战争而中断，没有得到繁荣和畅通。除了人为的阻碍，还因为隔着高山大河、路途遥远，缺乏安全保障，通行特别困难。只有到了公元前2世纪，张骞完成他探索中亚的史诗般的功业后，中国汉朝政府在西域地区实施了有效的管理，并和帕米尔以西各国建立了友好关系，才使得这条横贯亚洲的通道东段有了顺畅的保障，出现了空前的繁荣局面。这一切，是在突破了匈奴的阻隔之后取得的。

匈奴人的阻隔

汉代，中国经济繁荣，正在步入一个伟大的时代。繁荣的经济引起了人口的剧增，汉人开始向南推进，渡过扬子江，同化了土著部族，坚决而又缓慢地向珠江流域、荆棘丛林地带发展。在北方，汉人却无法向前推进，巍然屹立的万里长城仅能保持其领土不再被侵吞、疆界不再向南移而已。因为北部有匈奴人不断进行骚扰，这是汉人的宿敌。匈奴人的力量和野心日益膨胀，他们连续不断地侵犯蚕食汉朝的北部边疆，烽火台经常向首都长安传递警报。一方面，在秦朝（前221—前206）末年，从公元前210年起，汉人在长城地区的防卫已经松懈，因为帝国政府把长城交给流放的囚徒们防守，这支部队纪律非常松弛。另一方面，就在秦朝行将覆灭的时候，公元前209年，即汉朝建立的前三年，一个新兴的匈奴政权建立起来，成为强大和统一的国家。

内蒙古呼和浩特昭君墓中的匈奴武士骑马射箭图
A picture of a Xiongnu warrior shooting an arrow on horseback in Zhaojun's tomb in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia.

这个古老的北方游牧民族，在一位名叫冒顿的首领率领下，实现了前所未有的统一。冒顿原来在大月氏做人质，逃回以后杀父自立，占据了蒙古高原，拥有骑兵数十万，频频骚扰相邻民族，几乎朝所有方向扩展他的草原帝国。与匈奴人在人种和风俗习惯方面都相似的月氏人已经开始西迁。月氏国君主战败以后，匈奴族首领按照他们自己的习惯把敌人的头颅砍下来，做成供他们开怀痛饮的酒器。匈奴不仅攻占了大月氏，征服了楼兰等20多个西域小国，还占领了属于汉朝的河套地区。为此，汉朝的开国皇帝刘邦（前206—前195年在位）在公元前200年发动了一场针对匈奴的大规模军事行动，却以失败告终。汉朝打不过匈奴，就采取和亲的办法来求得边境的安定。按照和亲的约定，汉朝每年要向匈奴贡献几次礼品，每隔若干年送一个公主给单于（匈奴首领的尊号）作妻子。礼物的索取越来越多，丝绸和丝织品甚至多达数万件。但是，花了这么高昂的代价，并没换来边境的和平安宁，匈奴兵照样冲过边界抢劫，汉朝边民照样流血丧命。

匈奴人有一种习惯：谁要斩得敌人的一个脑袋，他就会得到一杯酒

的犒劳，并有权保留他获得的所有战利品。这种习惯只会驱使匈奴士兵进行劫掠。他们的贪得无厌、吃苦耐劳，以及军事化的生活方式，都使他们成了附近部族的可怕敌手和灾难性的邻邦。为了同匈奴人争战，汉人中损失、阵亡和被害的将士实在是无法计算，造成了非常恐怖的氛围。

另外，汉人的军法残酷而又严厉。一方面，对败阵回来的将领处以死刑；另一方面，如果一员汉将投降了匈奴或被当作俘虏挟持至匈奴，皇帝就要杀死他的亲属作为报复。第一道军令的后果是使战败的汉将再也不会露面，再也不会手持武器骑着马重上战场。他们或者以自杀来结束生命，或者投降敌人为其服务。第二道军令所引起的后果是：当一名将军一旦被敌人俘虏，皇帝就要迫害他们的家族。因此，投降的将领时时刻刻想的只是报仇雪恨，开始为敌人效力卖命。这实在不是明智的决策，最终会使大批汉族军事骨干外流，并且投靠匈奴人来反击汉朝。

明刻本，描绘汉初名将樊哙抗击匈奴，刺死匈奴单于冒顿的部下王圹的故事。
A Ming Dynasty block-printed edition, depicting the story of Fan Kuai, a famous general of early Han Dynasty who resisted the Xiongnu and killed Wang Kuang, a subordinate of Modun Chanyu of Xiongnu.

匈奴

匈奴是古代生活在欧亚大陆的游牧民族，包括中国历史上的戎族与狄族。公元前3世纪匈奴曾占领从里海到长城的广大地域，包括今蒙古的大部分。从西周（前1046—前771）开始匈奴就开始威胁中原王朝，公元前771年后，犬戎部落攻陷镐京，迫使平王东迁。

战国（前475—前221）时匈奴多次侵扰赵国，胡服骑射即是赵武灵王模仿匈奴作出的改良。赵将李牧曾大败匈奴。秦始皇（前246—前209年在位）命蒙恬北击匈奴，收河套。真正与匈奴进行大规模战斗是在汉朝多年和亲政策之后，公元前70年左右汉朝对匈奴进行了大规模反击，夺取当时最富庶的河西走廊，再北击匈奴至今蒙古境内，匈奴退至西域。公元前36年，陈汤在距长安4000公里的现阿富汗境内将匈奴首领郅支单于击杀，在西域设置行政机构。公元48年匈奴分裂为两部，南下附汉的称为南匈奴，留居漠北的称为北匈奴。后来南匈奴与汉联合夹击北匈奴，迫使其西迁，从此北匈奴就从中国古书中消失。经过南北朝（420—589）时期的残杀和各族融合，南匈奴从历史中消失。

汉武帝的梦想

汉武帝像
A portrait of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty.

匈奴问题一直在困扰着汉朝的执政者。汉朝初期虽然努力求和，但面对匈奴的苛刻索取，还是感到吃不消。经过60多年的励精图治，到了汉代第七位皇帝汉武帝的时候，中国进入了全盛时期，国力非常强盛，百业兴旺，经济繁荣，人口充足，兵强马壮。此时的汉帝国已强大到完全能够发动深入亚洲腹地的远征，重新建立、装备和延长其北方防线，在新开拓的领土设郡，以及在被后世称为丝绸之路的路线上促进东西方贸易的发展。

就在汉武帝冥思苦想、筹划打击匈奴的时候，他获得了一个重要情报，匈奴的单于杀死了与匈奴有世仇的大月氏王，并把他的头颅做成酒器以示侮辱。大月氏原是居住在甘肃河西走廊的游牧部落，被匈奴击败后被迫向西迁徙，在天山北麓的伊犁河流域重建家园，之后又再次向西南迁徙。新的月氏王非常仇恨匈奴，想要报仇雪耻。汉武帝和他的幕僚们十分重视这个情报，认为如果联合月氏，会使匈奴处于两面受敌的被动局面，对匈奴作战也会有更大的获胜把握。

这是一个扭转局面的良机。汉武帝找到了一个迫使匈奴人腹背受敌的良策。在一天上朝的时候，汉武帝向文武大臣提出了派人联络月氏夹击匈奴的计划，要他们商量计划是否可行。所有的大臣都加入了讨论，他们差不多都认为，这个计划很有诱惑力，从道理上讲，也是完全正确的。但是，要付诸实施，不仅万分困难，而且实在渺茫。汉武帝却毫不动摇，他认为，什么事开头做的时候都不会很有把握，既然这个计划有道理，就该设法试试。为了完成这一凶多吉少的微妙使命，他向西方派出了100多名汉族志愿人员，其首领就是张骞。

大月氏

公元前2世纪以前居住在中国西北部、后迁徙到中亚地区的游牧部族。在中国先秦时代的古籍中，或译作禺知、禺氏、牛氏等，后来也有译作月支的。月为肉字的古体，氏古音读作支。公元前5世纪至前2世纪初，月氏人游牧于河西走廊西部张掖至敦煌一带，势力强大，为匈奴劲敌。公元前177年前不久，月氏击破敦煌附近另一个小游牧部落乌孙，杀其王，夺其地，其部落逃奔匈奴。公元前177至前176年间，匈奴冒顿单于遣右贤王大败月氏。公元前174年，匈奴老上单于立，不久又大败月氏，杀其王，以其头为饮器。月氏大多数部众遂西迁至伊犁河流域及伊塞克湖附近。月氏在河西走廊留下小部分残众与祁连山间羌族混合，号称小月氏，而西迁之月氏从此被称为大月氏。公元前139至前129年间，乌孙王猎骄靡长大，为其父报仇，遂率部众西击大月氏，夺取伊犁河流域等地。大月氏再次被迫南迁，过大宛，定居于阿姆河北岸。公元前1世纪初叶，大月氏又征服阿姆河南的大夏。至公元初，遂建立强大的贵霜帝国。大月氏人的两次迁徙对中亚地区的历史影响非常大。它造成希腊化的

巴克特里亚王国灭亡，促使塞种入侵印度北部，并引起汉武帝派张骞出使西域，从而开辟丝绸之路。

II

From Chang'an to Da Yuezhi

Zhang Qian's Great Exploration

As part of a military's strategy of planning far in advance, Emperor Wu of Han decided to publicly recruit a special envoy for a diplomatic mission to Da Yuezhi. The announcement stated: In order to make contact with Yuezhi and attack the Xiongnu from both sides, warriors are now sought to go west to Yuezhi. Every able-bodied official, soldier, civilian, worker, and merchant with fighting skills can enlist. Those who return home having completed the mission will surely be handsomely rewarded.

The news spread like wildfire, as one person told ten more, and those ten told one hundred, until all of Chang'an had heard. The news stirred something inside of one hero, a brave and wise man with integrity named Zhang Qian. Zhang Qian was from Chenggu County in Shaanxi. At that time, he was working in the imperial palace as a retainer to the emperor. He had always felt strongly about the Xiongnu issue, maintaining that they ought to use force to fight back against the Xiongnu's harassment and invasions. When he saw the announcement, he believed that if they could join forces with the Yuezhi then it surely would help them fight against the Xiongnu. He immediately enlisted himself.

Emperor Wu of Han put everyone through a rigorous screening process before selecting one hundred men. Zhang Qian was designated the official diplomatic envoy to the Yuezhi state, with all the others serving as his entourage. The majority of his entourage was made up of lower-level officials, rank-and-file soldiers, and underprivileged

civilians. Among them was a Xiongnu person that had been taken captive by the Han during battle who volunteered to be the guide. His name was Gan Fu. He was an excellent archer, and he went on to become Zhang Qian's faithful aide. Once everything had been prepared, in the year 139 BC, Zhang Qian and his entourage set off on horse, while camels carried their gifts and gear. With the sound of the people of Chang'an wishing them well in the background, they began their arduous and great journey west. Those resolute volunteers gave up the comforts of their lives at home, departing from Chang'an to brave great dangers on their expedition. Zhang Qian, holding a *jie* (a two-meter long bamboo pole with three bundles of yak hair hanging from it to signify that theirs was an imperial mission), walked ahead of the group.

After Zhang Qian and his group of one hundred had left the capital Chang'an on their journey west, their first goal was to reach Lintao City, the site of the local government of Longxi Prefecture (current day southern Gansu). Arriving at Lintao City, Zhang Qian and his group received a warm welcome from the Longxi magistrate, who gave Zhang Qian a briefing on the situation in the west: In 175 BC, after the Yuezhi people's leader was killed by Xiongnu Laoshang Chanyu, they ran from Dunhuang and Qilian to the Yili River Valley. In 161 BC, they were defeated another time by the Wusun, who were under the control of the Xiongnu, and then fled to the Amu Darya River Valley. The journey there from Lintao was one of almost ten thousand *li* over endless deserts and freezing mountains. Not only was it dangerous, but it was also considered as a journey of doom, as the majority of people who attempted it never returned.

After listening to the magistrate, not only was Zhang Qian not the least bit afraid, but he was even more excited to begin. Now he finally knew the exact whereabouts of the Yuezhi, and would not have to roam around aimlessly searching for them. Zhang Qian decided to continue the journey by heading northwest from Lintao. First they would arrive at the eastern side of Qilian Mountains, doing all they

could to avoid the desert. They would then cross through the Xiongnu-Wusun border, and run toward the Amu Darya River. After crossing the Yellow River, they would covertly enter Hexi. According to Emperor Wu's plan, passing through the Xiongnu region in Hexi would lead them to the Western Region, where they could find the Yuezhi state. The area outside the Great Wall was controlled by the Xiongnu, so the further they reached, and the further away from the Han Empire they went, the more dangerous it became. At times, they would encounter Xiongnu herdsmen, who would stare at the Han envoy with surprise and suspicion. Zhang Qian had his group hide by day and travel by night, so as to avoid trouble and danger. They avoided the tents and flocks of sheep as much as possible, and tried to stay on the smaller paths, avoiding the main paths. It was almost impossible, however, for a group of that size to travel over such a vast area without being seen or heard.

There was no compass yet in those days, so while crossing the desert, they relied upon the sun to provide a sense of direction during the day, and the stars (primarily the Big Dipper and the North Star) at night. One day, while they were in the desert in western Hexi, dark clouds and a grey fog covered the sky, so they could not see any stars. Zhang Qian lifted his head to search for them many times until he finally saw two stars behind a hole in a cloud. They were two of the stars in the Big Dipper. He was able to judge their direction immediately based on those two stars, and discovered that they had gone the wrong way. They were heading northeast. Zhang Qian had everyone quickly turn around and head the other way.

The group made a steep turn to the left and headed toward the northwest. A star was rising on the horizon. After looking at it for a while, Zhang Qian realized that it wasn't a star at all. It was a light. He quickly passed on an order to have everyone quietly pass around the light ahead, lest they be discovered by the Xiongnu. The team continued steadily turning right, not wanting to move too quickly or too slowly. As they moved silently, everyone's heart pounded with

apprehension.

Suddenly, two dark shadows of figures on horseback ran toward them. They shouted at them to stop for inspection. Zhang Qian whipped his horse, and the entire team rapidly ran away. The two Xiongnu chased them from behind, wanting to figure out exactly who these people were up, having disobeyed orders. As they neared the tail end of the team, a member of the entourage lifted his bow and shot an arrow at them. The arrow whizzed in the air, and one of the Xiongnu rolled off his horse. The other quickly fled.

The group passed around the light, and continued risking their lives by speeding toward the northwest. How Zhang Qian wished there were a straight line leading to Yuezhi!

As day broke, the sun shone upon their backs, and their undergarments were soaked with sweat. They removed their outer clothing, and exposed their bodies to the hot air. The sun burned brighter and hotter, the temperature rose rapidly, and they were quickly going to deplete their water supply. Forcing themselves to carry on until noon, Zhang Qian and his men suffered from heads aching, eyes blurred, and mouths parched from the sun, in addition to extreme fatigue. The horses were walking more and more slowly, and their food supply was growing thin. They simply could not move another step.

Suddenly, one of the men said, "there's grass ahead." Everyone looked up, and saw a patch of green grass appearing upon the horizon. There was also a pond, and it looked as if sheep and cattle were roaming about. Zhang Qian thought that there were bound to be Xiongnu on that patch of grassy land, so they ought to avoid it. But they simply could not carry on any longer. Zhang Qian sent out the order that everyone should quietly proceed to the grassland to get drinking water and food and avoid being discovered by the Xiongnu soldiers.

Zhang Qian and his men gathered up their courage and spirits to continue ahead, hoping to find the grassland so they could rest. But

when they traveled a little further ahead, the grassland suddenly disappeared. It was only a mirage after all.

Then, a burst of grey clouds appeared from the horizon behind them. A team of Xiongnu on horseback were charging toward them. They were real people, not just another illusion. As he looked back, Zhang Qian felt that the situation was extremely dangerous. Holding the reins with his left hand and a sword in his right hand, he commanded everyone to prepare to attack the men approaching from behind.

The men turned around their horses and bent over the horse's backs, not moving. The Xiongnu were quickly approaching, and yelled out to them in their own language, "Han soldiers! Surrender!" When they were separated by only a hundred steps or so, Zhang Qian gave the order to release the arrows. Over a hundred arrows shot like raindrops toward the Xiongnu horsemen. Many of them fell off their horses. Under his leadership, the men mustered up their courage and charged forward with knives, swords, and other weapons. They made the Xiongnu scatter in all directions. But Zhang Qian did not dare to pursue war, and did not have his men chase after them for the kill. Instead, they turned their horses around once more, and headed northwest.

Now, Xiongnu horsemen were coming at them from all directions. Countless arrows were shot off chaotically, and many men were struck dead, falling from their horses. The ring of Xiongnu encircling them grew closer and closer. Zhang Qian's horse was exhausted, and its front legs suddenly buckled under, causing Zhang Qian to tumble to the ground. A Xiongnu sped over, jumped off his horse, and with one foot on Zhang Qian's back, pulled out a rope and proceeded to bind him tightly.

Breaking through the Xiongnu Barrier

Zhang Qian and his men were escorted by the Xiongnu on horseback toward the northeast. Several days later, they arrived at the Xiongnu imperial court, where the Chanyu lived. The imperial court in that day was located in the area where Hohhot in Inner Mongolia lies today.

The Xiongnu soldiers first instructed Zhang Qian to enter the large Chanyu tent, while the others waited outside in a line. Zhang Qian held up the *jie*, and walked ahead, his feet shackled. The Chanyu at that time was Junchen, Laoshang Chanyu's son. When he heard the report from his troops that they had captured an envoy sent by the Han Empire and his entourage, the Chanyu was very pleased, and decided to interrogate the prisoner himself. He ordered his guard to bring the prisoner to him in his tent.

Zhang Qian walked forward, raised his *jie*, and told Junchen Chanyu: "I am a messenger from the Han Empire, sent by the Han emperor on a diplomatic mission to Yuezhi. As I was passing through your state, I was captured by your cavalry. I request your majesty to give the orders to release me."

Junchen Chanyu looked closely at Zhang Qian for a moment, and said, "Yuezhi is to the northwest of my country. How could the Han Empire send someone across my nation to Yuezhi? If I want to send someone south to Yue, crossing through your land on the way, would you agree to it?"

Zhang Qian was about to explain himself, but Chanyu, not giving him time to speak, pointed at Zhang Qian and his men lined up behind him and cursed them: "You entered and trampled upon our territory without authorization, and killed many of my soldiers. What punishment do you think you deserve for this?"

No one answered, and Chanyu pointed at Zhang Qian fiercely, saying, "First grab this one and take him out for target practice. Shoot some holes in him!" Several guards immediately seized Zhang Qian and prepared to take him away, but Zhang Qian stood firm.

Chanyu saw that his threats were useless, and walked a step

closer toward Zhang Qian. In a soft tone of voice, he said, "I don't have to kill you. And if you assist me with a few matters, I can even make you an official. It won't be any lower a position than what you had with the Han."

Zhang Qian held his head up and looked at the tent ceiling. He proudly replied, "I am a messenger from the Han Empire. I will not work for the Xiongnu."

After further interrogations and beatings, the Xiongnu locked up Zhang Qian. Later, they gave him to a nobleman to be his slave, tending to hundreds of sheep and cattle. Several years later, to try to soften up Zhang Qian, Junchen Chanyu gave him a Xiongnu girl to be his wife, and then took them along with Gan Fu and other men to the western part of the Western Region, where they tended sheep for the Wise King of the Right..

The distance to the Western Region was suddenly much reduced. Once again, he felt that there was still a chance that he could escape. Before, he had thought about running away, but no matter whether he ran south or west, he would have to cross over two thousand *li* (one *li* is equal to 500 meters) of Xiongnu territory. Even if he could avoid being caught, he would certainly starve along the way. But now, things were different.

Time passed quickly and it was already the eleventh spring since Zhang Qian had been captured. Time passed by, day by day, but Zhang Qian's duty was never completed. What should he do? He gazed at the *jie* in his hand, which he always carried with him for eleven years. He used it as a whip when tending sheep, and most of the yak's hair had already fallen off. The *jie* had always served as a reminder to Zhang Qian to never forget his mission to Yuezhi.

Zhang Qian's Xiongnu wife gave birth to a son and a daughter. The Xiongnu did not think that he would try to escape anymore, and did not watch him as closely as before. There were times when he would be gone for several days while herding sheep, and no one would ask where he was. Zhang Qian decided to take advantage of the

situation, and rallied Gan Fu and the others together. They gathered some food, and pretending they were going out to tend to the flock, stole a few of camels and horses of the Wise King of the Right, and fled toward the west.

The group was not nearly so powerful or orderly as they had been eleven years before, and had none of the gifts or weapons that they had before. They had lost nearly half of their men in the previous battle in the desert, and the clothing and bodies of those that remained were weary, and worn. Yet it was, however, with a fully confident manner that they set out to find the Yuezhi State.

Beneath the moonlight, Zhang Qian turned back in search of a light, thinking that it could be coming from his own tent. His wife had probably already milked the goats, and was waiting for him to come home for dinner. His children were probably riding a horse, looking for their dad in the grasslands. To keep his escaping a secret, he didn't tell his wife or children anything when he left. He just silently said a prayer for them, and then he was on his way.

They sustained themselves on food and water rations, and continued west without stopping. The journey was not easy. If they lost their way, Zhang Qian would figure out their direction based on the stars. Having lived with the Xiongnu for eleven years, they were accustomed to the Xiongnu way of life, and could speak their language too. Those who weren't paying close attention would not be able to tell that they were in fact Han people, so the group did not run into much trouble or danger during their long trek across the grasslands and desert. The Xiongnu that they saw along the way simply assumed that they were some of their own.

They didn't have much food, so to help it last a little longer, everyone ate as little as possible. Luckily, Gan Fu was a good shot. Thanks to his archery skills, the group was often able to feast on fowl, gazelle, or rabbit meat. They also ate their fill whenever they came across any edible plants growing in the wild. In this way, they crossed over a thousand *li* on the northern Sai grasslands, and entered the

Western Region.

Expedition Deep into Central Asia

After a long and arduous trek, they finally came upon a gigantic lake-the Salt Marsh in Xinjiang called Lop Nur (Lake Luobupo). Zhang Qian gave the orders that they would stay there for the night. By the light of the setting sun, he began assigning tasks to the men. Some were to set up the tents or tend to the horses while others were to go hunting, fetch water, or make a fire.

The ground near the marsh was covered in a white powder. It wasn't until examining it closely and tasting it that people realized it was salt. The lakesides were full of reeds. The men fetching water passed by the reeds, squatted next to the lake, and drank the water from their hands. It was salty and bitter. Luckily, someone dug a hole in a dried-up stream bed and found some water. He ladled it out for all to drink, and everyone realized how thirsty they had been. One man collected dry grass and leaves along with dry animal manure while another struck the flint to start a fire. They hung a pot and began to boil water. Someone else found a pile of wild duck eggs among the reeds, and boiled them for everyone to eat. Another man struck down a fat wild sheep in the thick grass, but it was too large to fit in the pot, so they could not boil the meat. Instead, they cut it into small pieces and roasted it over the fire. It was the finest dinner they had eaten in years. Zhang Qian and his men slept soundly beside the lake. The next day, they went hunting again, as they had to get enough food for future provisions as well as satisfying their present hunger. Then they moved on, passing around the northern side of the lake and heading westward once again. They found themselves in the desert once more. Not long after reaching the desert, they suddenly saw a gate tower on the horizon.

Zhang Qian asked the herdsmen on the road, and found out that

they had reached the state of Loulan. With a population of over 14,000, it was one of the largest of the states in the Western Region. Forty years prior, the Xiongnu had seized land all the way here, capturing Loulan along with over twenty other Western Region states. The Chanyu had even sent an official to be stationed in the new territory to oversee the collection of taxes. There were Xiongnu troops at Loulan, so the group could not enter the gates. They stopped beside a lake, and after asking for directions to Yuezhi, they continued moving forward, following along the northern side of the Tarim (Talimu) Basin.

Six hundred *li* west of Loulan, they reached the State of Weili (current day Weili County, Xinjiang). It was a smaller state, with only some 9,000 people. In addition to raising cattle and sheep, the Weili people grew crops. Zhang Qian and his men were able to replenish their food and water supplies there before moving forward. A little over five hundred *li* west of Weili was the great state of Qiuci (or Kucha, located in current day Kuqa County). Not only was Qiuci a state with a population of over 80,000 that harvested its own grains, but they were also able to mine copper and produce ironware, showing what a high level of civilization and productivity the Western Region had attained. Some four hundred *li* west of Qiuci lay the state of Gumo (in today's Aksu region of Xinjiang), Gumo ranks as one of the larger states of the Western Region with a population of over 20,000 people, who lived a life of tending livestock and crops.

The small state of Wensu (near modern day Wushen, Xinjiang) was another hundred *li* west of there. Zhang Qian and his men stopped there to stock up on food and water. Another six hundred *li* west of Wensu, they came upon the state of Shule (near modern day Kashgar, Xinjiang), which had a population of nearly 20,000. Shule was surrounded on three sides—west, north, and south—by tall mountains. Water flowing down from the mountains formed a stream there that irrigated many fields, making the Shule State agriculturally quite advanced. It was also a commercial center. Merchants from the

northern and southern parts of the Western Region, as well as those from several states west of the Congling Mountains (today's Pamirs highlands), converged in Shule to trade. The street market there flourished. Upon arrival there, Zhang Qian and his men saw some foreign merchants. Through an interpreter, they asked them how to get to Yuezhi. They answered that Yuezhi was just west of there, on the other side of the Congling Mountains. Upon hearing this, the men jumped for joy. After all that they had been through, they were finally going to reach their destination.

Not long after they had left Shule, the group started to ascend the mountain. It was the world-famous Congling (literally meaning "Onion Range"), and was so called because of the wild onions that grew in abundance there. There were three passes in the mountain range, which connected the different countries on either side. The northern pass led to Dayuan, the western pass led to Yuezhi, and the southern pass led to Shendu (modern day India). Zhang Qian and the group only had to travel westward from the western pass for some two thousand *li* to reach the capital of Yuezhi, but they took the wrong route, and traveled west from the northern pass. Suddenly they found themselves in Dayuan (modern day Fergana, Uzbekistan), a state with 200,000 people.

To their surprise, Zhang Qian and his men discovered that not only was the scenery in Dayuan completely different from that of the Han Empire, but also different from the other states in the Western Region. The landscape there was covered in huge alfalfa fields, and grape vines crawled upon wooden frames built in valleys, alongside roads, and in people's yards. It was like nothing Zhang Qian and the others had ever seen before. The homes of the Dayuan people were also different from those in China. They were made brick and wood, and had no eaves, but always had slanted roofs. Dayuan people also looked different, with noses that stood tall, deep-set eyes, and long, neat beards.

The Dayuan felt a similar sense of peculiarity upon seeing these

thin men with ragged clothes, disheveled hair, and skin darkened by the sun. Zhang Qian greeted them in Chinese, but they could not understand anything he said. He switched to speaking the language of Xiongnu, and some of them understood at once, and began speaking with him. After they learned that Zhang Qian was sent by the Han Dynasty, expressions of admiration came over their faces. They first praised the Han for being a rich and beautiful nation, not only strong in population, but also abundant in production. They then said that there was a magical worm there that spit out a kind of thread that could be woven into brocade to make into clothing that was soft and warm, light and smooth. The silk could also be embroidered into all kinds of beautiful patterns. That, they said, was truly a treasure.

Upon hearing this, Zhang Qian explained to them, "This kind of worm is called a silkworm. We have been raising them for many years. We feed them a kind of leaves, and they release a kind of silk. We reel the silk, weave it into silk material, and make clothing and bedding out of it."

At nightfall, Zhang Qian and his men had reached a small city of just over 1,000 people. It was where the merchants from in and around the Congling met to trade, so the market there was lively, and commerce was developed. Local officials who had already got word of a Han envoy's arrival took their interpreters and went to see Zhang Qian. They conversed with each other enthusiastically, and promised to tell the Dayuan king of their mission. Then they took the men to get their hair cut, have a shower and a change of clothes, and then hosted them for a meal. The men slept in that small city that night, and having caught up on their rest, they all appeared much younger. The next day, they departed for the Dayuan capital in high spirits.

The Dayuan king had always admired the Han for its richly endowed civilization, and warmly welcomed Zhang Qian and his entourage. There, they sampled carrots, garlic, and sesame, none of which Han had at the time, and saw the famous Dayuan Ferghana horses, alfalfa, and grapes. As they were departing, the Dayuan king

sent someone to lead them to the State of Kangju (in the current day area north of the Amu River, between the Aral Sea and Balkhash Lake).

The State of Dayuan was surrounded by the Congling Mountains to the east, south, and north. To the west were grasslands and deserts. The streams that originated in the Congling Mountains converged to create a large river (today called the Syr Darya River), which passed through Dayuan, and emptied into the Aral Sea. Zhang Qian and his men crossed over the river and passed through the deserts and grasslands as they headed southwest. After many days of tiring travels, they arrived at the Kangju capital, Beitian. Like the Xiongnu, the Kangju were a nomadic people who lived in tents. Inside a very large tent, Zhang Qian paid his respects to the Kangju king, who found Zhang Qian's expedition to be very admirable, and welcomed him enthusiastically. The Kangju State was presently being threatened by the Xiongnu, whose envoys often took up residence there. Due to the difficulties that this created for Zhang Qian, as well as his own anxiousness to get to Yuezhi, the group did not wish to stay in Kangju for long. And so, after three days, they left Kangju with a guide sent by the king to accompany them. The friendly Kangju man accompanied them all the way to Yuezhi. Now, Zhang Qian finally had the chance to complete his mission.

Dayuan

Dayuan was the name of an ancient Central Asian state located at the western foot of the Pamirs Highland, by the middle and upper reaches of the Syr Darya River, where Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan lies today. The original inhabitants seem to have been primarily Saka (Sai) people. During the Hellenistic era, Alexander the Great conquered eastward, and established the city of "Alexandria Eschate" (or "Alexandria the Furthest") on the banks of the Syr Darya River. Under the Seleucids, it was rebuilt as Antiocheia.

Seemingly neither city penetrated eastwards into Dayuan. During the height of the Bactrian kingdom, however, especially during the northern campaign of Euthydemus, the Bactrians occupied the area, and constructed walls around each village according to the Greek custom.

During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, Zhang Qian went to the Western Region. Between 129 BC and 128 BC, he arrived at the western side of the Pamirs, reaching Dayuan first. According to this accounts after retuning home, Dayuan was made up of over seventy towns, with a population of tens of thousands. It was rich in agriculture and produced rice, wheat, grapes, alfalfa, and was known for its Ferghana breed of horses. Dayuan was bordered to the northwest by Kangju, by Da Yuezhi and Bactria to the southwest, and Wusun to the northeast. Passing through to the Pamirs to the east via the Teluoke mountain pass led to Shule. It was an important east-west transportation hub at the time.

Emperor Wu of Han had heard that Dayuan bred good horses, so in the year 104 BC, he sent a special envoy with golden silk to exchange for some. The Dayuan did not believe it to be a fair exchange, and killed the envoy. The emperor was furious, and sent his general Li Guangli along with some troops to Dayuan. The first expedition to Dayuan was unsuccessful, immediately after they arrived at the small state of Yucheng at the eastern border of Dayuan, they were defeated. The emperor sent troops westward again, this time transporting food. They took over the capital during the fourth year of the Tai Chu reign period (101 BC), killing the Dayuan king Wu Gua. They installed a new king, and from that point forward, Dayuan submitted to the authority of the Han Empire.

Discoveries from Da Yuezhi

After walking for several days, they arrived at a state advanced in agriculture and livestock husbandry situated in a mountainous area. This was Yuezhi, the pursuit of which took them eleven years, and took so many of their companions' lives. Zhang Qian shed tears of exhilaration. The climate at Yuezhi was more mild and humid than that of Xiongnu. Green trees covered the mountains, and herds of cattle and sheep grazed in the hills. Fertile farmland connected on the level ground, wheat blew in the breeze, and the people were at hard at work in the fields.

The king was over fifty years old. He was the son of previous king of Yuezhi, who was killed by Xiongnu Modun Chanyu. Zhang Qian took hold of his *jie* and presented himself respectfully to the Yuezhi king, saying, "Your majesty, I was sent on a diplomatic embassy by the Han Empire. It is the emperor's desire that I show respect to you. The Han are currently preparing to attack the Xiongnu. The emperor sent me to your country in the hopes of building a Yuezhi-Han alliance to counter our common enemy, the Xiongnu." Upon hearing this, the king was very pleased. He felt that Zhang Qian and his men had undergone much difficulty in traveling the more than 10,000 *li* from the Han Empire to Da Yuezhi. He had admired the strength and prosperity of the Han Dynasty since his days at the Qilian Mountains. Although he had previously associated with Han people, the two countries' royal courts had never been in official contact. Now that they had moved to the faraway west, he found it hard to believe that he was looking at a Han ambassador there before him, and quickly began asking at the situation in the Han Empire.

Zhang Qian answered him, "Our Han Empire is stronger than ever before. Our reigning emperor is a talented, bold, and visionary leader. He is determined to centralize the manpower and resources of the entire nation, and call up tens of thousands of troops to launch a counterattack against the Xiongnu. He has sent me here in the hopes of forming an alliance with your country. Your country would begin attacking the Xiongnu from the west, causing them to be attacked

from both sides. After the Xiongnu have been defeated, you would be free to return to your homeland in the Qilian Mountains, at peace with the Han for generations to come."

The Yuezhi king paused for a moment, and said that the Xiongnu had killed his parents, forced them to leave their homeland and to move to a faraway place. It was extremely difficult for them to move to Tianshan Mountains, and when they had only been there for not more than ten years, the Xiongnu supported the Wusun to attack them again. They were forced to move yet again. That the Han wanted to attack the Xiongnu in full-force was a great thing, as it would vent the Yuezhi's anger for them and avenge their humiliation. However, it would be too difficult for them to cooperate by sending their own troops, as the distance to Xiongnu was too far, and they must pass through several countries in between. It would also not be easy for them to return to the Qilian Mountains. The Yuezhi king expressed his goodwill toward the Han emperor, but spoke of the difficulties that they faced, and hoped that the Han would understand their situation.

Zhang Qian pondered this for a moment, and then said, "The Xiongnu are the long-time enemies of both of our countries. They brought great calamity upon both of our countries, and defeating them is in the best interest of both of our countries as well. Sending troops out to attack them, due to the long journey that would require, would naturally be difficult. But those difficulties are certainly surmountable. When we were sent on this mission to your country, we were detained by the Xiongnu for over ten years, but in the end, we escaped."

The king of Yuezhi listened to this, and was moved by what he heard. "The unspeakable hardships that you have endured further demonstrate the extent of the Han's goodwill toward my country. However, sending out troops and moving to a new home are enormous undertakings, and I must discuss them with my advisors. You've just arrived. Why don't you rest up and then have a look around my country?"

At that, the Yuezhi king ordered his officials to prepare a welcome banquet for the Han guests. The banquet was held on a carpet spread out on the ground inside a large tent. It was a sumptuous feast, with beef and mutton platters, bowls filled with wine, and large servings of wheat-based foods. Everything was seasoned with onion and garlic. There were even some unfamiliar vegetables served. The little, round ones were garden peas, the slightly thin and flat ones were lima beans, and the tasty, crispy ones cut into slices were cucumbers. They were all produces grown especially by the Yuezhi. Zhang Qian and his men stayed in Yuezhi for a year, during which time they learned many new things.

A long time prior to that time, there was once a country that stood in that place called Bactria (Daxia). Two hundred years earlier (in the year 323 BC), the Greek Macedonian king Alexander the Great led a campaign to the east, first destroying the Persian Empire, which was several times larger than Greek territory at the time, and then capturing Bactria. There, he established a Greek kingdom, and a currency with the king's face depicted on silver coins. Alexander the Great then continued further south and east until he arrived at the Indus River in the western part of India (current day Pakistan), where he established a Greek state. Later, when the Yuezhi people moved west from the Qilian Mountains to the Amu Darya River, they drove away the Saka (Sai) people living there, instigating the first large-scale migration of an entire tribe in the history of the world. After being attacked by the Yuezhi, the Saka were divided into three different tribes. The first tribe moved to the northeastern part of Parthia (Anxi), where they murdered the Parthian king who was coming to suppress them and settled on a plateau in eastern Iran. A second tribe went south to Bactria, where they forced the Greek rulers there to go to Punjab, India. A third group went west to the European flatlands. The Yuezhi continued southward, entering Bactria and forcing the Saka people to the Kabul River Valley south of the Hindu Kush Mountains. The Saka people then established the Kapisa Kingdom, which was

bordered by Parthia to the west, the Greek kingdom of Punjab to the east, and the Hindu Kush Mountains to the north, so they could confront the Yuezhi. The Da Yuezhi established their state north of the Hindu Kush Mountains, separated from the small group of Yuezhi people who remained at the Qilian Mountains. Although the state of Bactria had been destroyed, over one million Bactrian people remained, outnumbering the Yuezhi people.

After the Da Yuezhi state was founded, it was divided into five sections, establishing five Yabghus and Marquises to rule separately. They adopted some Greek customs, and put their king's face on their silver coins. The Yuezhi grew crops, but had no ironware yet, so their farming techniques were crude and the crop yield low. Fruits such as peaches and plums, which were introduced to them from the Han, quickly spread throughout Iran and India. The Yuezhi even constructed cities, building a capital city south of the Amu Darya River called Bactra (Lanshi). Their houses were not constructed in the Parthian style with flat roofs, but in the style of Dayuan, with slanted roofs, which were built by stolen Greek slaves.

The Yuezhi were skilled merchants, and often traveled to faraway countries to peddle their goods. Commerce was developed within Yuezhi as well, drawing tradesmen from many countries, and making Yuezhi a station for trade between the East and West at that time. Zhang Qian met merchants from many different countries in Yuezhi, and had pleasant interactions with them, so that they could get to know each other and establish a friendship. From his talks with the Parthian merchants, Zhang Qian learned that they also came from a very large country, and that their script was written horizontally on sheepskin from left to right, unlike the Han script, which was written vertically on bamboo from top to bottom. He also came into contact with people from Yancai (today's Black Sea region), a place that had many furs, as he learned. The people that he ran into from Mesopotamia (modern day northern Persian Gulf, in the Syrian region) said that in their country they raised a type of bird big enough

to be ridden like a horse that laid eggs as big as water jugs. He even saw a Mesopotamian magician that performed tricks such as spitting fire and swallowing knives. The merchants from Sindh (Shendu) told him that they raised peacocks and elephants, and that when they were in a war, their soldiers rode to battle on elephants. The Sindhs and the Han had established trade relations early on. The Sindhs would sell Shu clothing and Qiong bamboo from the Han to countries like Yuezhi. Zhang Qian even heard that in the western part of Mesopotamia there was an advanced civilization called the Maojian (also called Daqin, the ancient Roman Empire), and that there were many, many more countries west of there.

Bactria (Daxia)

Bactria primarily refers to an Amu Darya River civilization that took over from one named Namazga. It was located in a region south of the Amu Darya River (ancient Greek name was Oxus) and north of the Hindu Kush Mountains (ancient Greek name was Paropamisus). Among their ancient relics that survive today are small female statues with large bodies and small heads measuring less than fifteen centimeters tall that are over 4,000 years old. After the Bactria region was conquered by the Greeks, it became an ancient Central Asian state. The Chinese name for Bactria is Daxia, and is the birthplace of the Aryan people. Zoroastrianism, which originated in Iran, was once prevalent there.

It seemed as though there was no end to the world. It was far from being as the Han people had imagined—the Han Empire at the center of the world, with the sea to the southeast, the desert to the north, mountains to the west, and a few underdeveloped minority peoples living on all sides. On the contrary, the world was much larger than the Han people anticipated it to be. During his mission abroad, Zhang Qian came to realize the extent of all that there was to

learn, and that many countries existed outside of the Han Empire.

In awe and anticipation, Zhang Qian and his men felt that they had gained much by their mission, which had opened their eyes to many things. To their misfortune, however, they discovered that the Yuezhi were already living and working peacefully, and thinking nothing of taking revenge on the Xiongnu. Zhang Qian was unable to fulfill his task of joining the Han and Yuezhi in an alliance, and all he could do was lead his men home. The Yuezhi king did not try to persuade them to stay. He gave them some local products and currency, and sent them on their way home.

Opening a Window into Foreign Lands

The Yuezhi told Zhang Qian a new route home: from Shule, go east following the northern side of the Kunlun Mountains, which connects with the Northern Route near the Salt Marsh (Lop Nur). This was called the Southern Route. The Northern and Southern Routes were separated by a large desert (the Taklimakan Desert), so very few Xiongnu soldiers went to the Southern Route, making it a much safer route than the Northern Route for Zhang Qian and his men. They crossed over the snow and ice-covered Congling Mountains heading east, passed through Shule with all of its flourishing markets, and then moved southeast. When they reached the northern foot of the Kunlun Mountains, they headed east on the Southern Route.

The Southern Route was also a very important East-West trade route. Prior to the Xiongnu influence spreading to the Northern Route, the Southern Route was not as lively as the Northern Route. However, as soon as the Xiongnu began controlling the Northern Route, the Southern Route started bustling with trade. Many merchants from countries west of the Congling Mountains began traveling along the Southern Route to avoid having the Xiongnu levy taxes on or even confiscate their goods.

On the way home, Zhang Qian first arrived at the Southern Asian state of Bactria. He stayed there for a year, during which he carefully inspected the country. He even sent representatives as far as Sogdiana (approximately located in the Zeravshan River Basin between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers, in the present day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan area) and Parthia (247 BC-226 AD, a Greek-speaking empire established by Parthian people, located on the Iranian plateau). From there, they returned following the southern rim of the Tarim River Basin, a different route from the one they originally set out upon.

Five hundred *li* to the southeast of Shule lay the state of Yarkand (or Shache, near current-day Yarkand County in Xinjiang). With a population of over 16,000, it was one of the largest Western Region states. The Yarkand people were involved in both animal husbandry and crop farming. They also produced a type sapphire that was known far and wide.

Some three hundred *li* east of Yarkand they came across the great Western Region state of Khotan (Yutian, in current-day Yutian County, Xinjiang). It had a population of 20,000, and people there raised livestock and grew crops. The famous Khotan jade came from the nearby mountains, which the craftsmen shaped into all kinds of exquisite household utensils and elegant display pieces and sold to faraway places.

Continuing another four hundred *li* east led to another great state called Yumi (in current-day Yutian County, Xinjiang). It had a population of over 20,000, and they had already acquired the skill of iron smelting. Zhang Qian watched with his own eyes as the blacksmiths used a steel-making furnace three *chi* (equal to one meter) in diameter to forge iron tools such as sickles and axes.

The people there looked quite different from the Han people, with prominent noses, deep-set eyes, and black hair. The women combed their hair into a ponytail and then twisted it on top of their heads. They wore copper rings on their fingers and copper necklaces around

their necks. Zhang Qian was astonished to find a blue printed cotton material there, with designs such as dragons, lions, or people printed on it.

Over a thousand *li* east from Yumi laid a small state called Qiemo (modern-day Qiemo County, Xinjiang), which had only a thousand people. Seven hundred *li* east of Qiemo was the state that Zhang Qian and his men had passed through before, Loulan. They rested for several days in the capital city of Yuni so that they could replenish their food and water supplies as well as to look into the situation between their homeland and the Xiongnu. An innkeeper told them that the Han and the Xiongnu had been at war for three or four years. In the beginning, the Han seemed to have the upper hand, and had taken back the Hetao area that the Xiongnu had controlled for many years.

Zhang Qian was so pleased to hear this, and felt that they ought to return as quickly as possible, as Emperor Wu was certainly longing for news from them. However, since they were traveling east and nearing Xiongnu, in order to not to be captured, Zhang Qian decided they ought to go to the place where the Qiang people lived, south of the Qilian Mountains.

They left Loulan and headed southeast, preparing to cross over the Qilian Mountains and return home from the southern foothills. But just as they were in the middle of the mountains, they once again came across Xiongnu horsemen, who captured them once more and took them as prisoners. They were escorted to the Chanyu Court several thousand *li* north. Zhang Qian was extremely upset by this, not because he was afraid he would be killed, but because he thought that he would have no chance to report all of the new discoveries from the west to the emperor.

The news of Zhang Qian's second capture spread quickly. His Xiongnu wife, feeling bittersweet, took their children with her to find him. The family then depended on each other for survival as they barely had enough food to survive, living as slaves. A long time later,

Zhang Qian heard that Gan Fu was tending sheep somewhere in the area, but he didn't know where his companion had wandered. Zhang Qian waited for him persistently, day after day, always searching for an opportunity to go home.

Over a year later, Junchen Chanyu died of an illness. Just as his son, Prince Yu Dan, was about to succeed to the throne, his younger brother Yi Zhixie suddenly led an army to kill his brother, and to steal the throne away. Prince Yu Dan was not going to give up without a fight, and the two fought each other in a fierce battle near Yudan's Court. All the Xiongnu people entered the fight, and bodies and blood covered the ground.

The Xiongnu who were guarding Zhang Qian and Gan Fu also went to give themselves to the fight. Zhang Qian, who was tending sheep at the time, took advantage of the chaos and escaped with Gan Fu and his wife. The three of them made a mad dash southward, avoiding areas with many tents, dodging frenzied Xiongnu, and gradually putting distance between them and the fighting. It was the middle of winter, and the falling snow quickly covered up any tracks that could give the Xiongnu a chance to follow them.

In 126 BC, Zhang Qian and his partner Gan Fu finally made it back to Chang'an. Their mission lasted thirteen years, and only two men from the original group returned. What they went through during their risky mission shocked Chang'an. During all of those years, despite all of the difficulties and obstacles that they encountered, that *jie*, signifying their sacred Han Dynasty mission, was not lost. When Zhang Qian took the *jie*, which by now had lost all of its yak hair, and presented it to Emperor Wu of Han in both hands, the Emperor was very moved. Zhang Qian explained the reason why the Da Yuezhi were not willing to dispatch troops to attack the Xiongnu and reported on how the group had been taken prisoner twice, with many members dying and disappearing. He even described in detail every western state that he had visited in the previous thirteen years. The eyes of Emperor Wu and the Han Dynasty were opened, discovering that the

world was, in fact, much larger than they had realized. To reward them for their extraordinary difficulties on their exploration to the west, Emperor Wu conferred upon Zhang Qian the title Palace Counsellor, and gave Gan Fu the title Fengming Jun.

Although Zhang Qian did not successfully complete his mission, he did learn that, apart from Yuezhi, Central Asia also included Dayuan, Bactria, Kangju, and five or six other important countries such as Parthia and Mesopotamia, thousands of *li* west of Parthia. He observed the way of life in northern India, and took notice of the Chinese goods in Parthia. He reported to Emperor Wu of Han on the possibility of making contact with all of the western states, pointing out the potential value in developing trade relations with these areas and the advantage of forming alliances with other nations. The Han Dynasty placed high value on all of the information that he gathered. He had information on the countries that he went through as well as on many areas that he heard about along the way, including some that were still completely unknown to the Han until that point.

2

从长安到大月氏

张骞的伟大探险

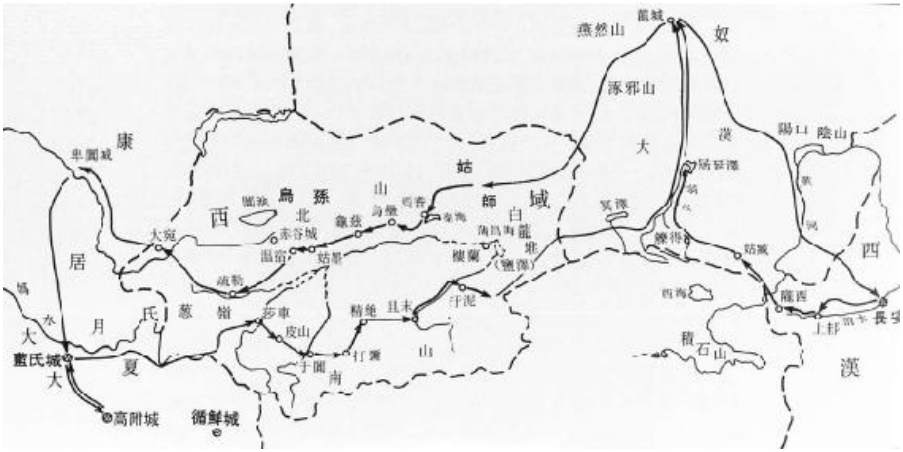
基于军事战略的深谋远虑，汉武帝决定公开召募出使大月氏的使臣。告示说：为了联络月氏，夹击匈奴，特召募西去月氏的勇士，凡大汉朝政府官员，军、民、工、商等人，身体强健、武艺娴熟者，均可报名应募，事成归国，定当重赏。

这消息像生了翅膀，一传十，十传百，立刻传遍了整个长安。消息也惊动了一位英雄，他就是守信义、多勇略的张骞。张骞是陕西城固县人，当时在武帝的宫中担任“郎”的官职（皇帝的侍从者）。他平时对匈奴问题颇为留心，主张用战斗来回击匈奴的挑衅和侵扰。他见了招募的告示，认为如能联络上月氏，对打败匈奴必定很有帮助，因此立刻报名应募。

经过严格的挑选，汉武帝选出了100人。张骞被封为出使月氏国的使节，其余的人都做他的随员。张骞的随从多数是下级军官、士兵和贫民，其中有一个在战争中被汉朝俘虏而自愿做向导的匈奴人，他叫甘父，擅长射箭，后来成为张骞的忠实助手。一切准备完毕后，公元前139年，在长安人民和文武官员一声声“珍重”的送别中，张骞和他的随员们跨上战马，驱赶着运送行李、礼物的骆驼，开始了艰苦而伟大的西行。这些坚强的志愿者放弃了温暖舒适的生活，从长安出发，冒着极大的危险踏上了远征之旅。张骞持“节”（一根七尺多长的竹竿，挂着三把耗牛毛，表示皇帝的使臣身份）走在最前头。

甘肃敦煌莫高窟壁画，描绘了汉武帝派遣张骞出使西域的情景。
A mural painting of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu, depicting the scene where Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty sent Zhang Qian on a mission to the Western Region.

张骞一行百余人离开京城长安西行后，第一个目标便是陇西郡（今甘肃省南部）的治所临洮城。到达临洮城，张骞一行受到了陇西郡守的热情款待。郡守还向张骞介绍了西部情况。公元前175年，月氏人被匈奴老上单于杀了首领之后，从敦煌、祁连间跑到伊犁河流域。公元前161年，月氏人又被匈奴控制的乌孙人击败，往西迁到阿姆河流域。从临洮到那里有近万里之遥，其间隔着无边的沙漠和终年不化的雪山，不仅艰险万分，而且常常是十人过去九不还，因此被世人看成是死亡之旅。



张骞通西域古地图

A sketch map illustrating the road taken by envoy Zhang Qian during his journey to the west.

张骞听完郡守这番话，不仅没有半点畏惧之心，反而更加振奋。因为总算知道月氏人的下落，不用像无头苍蝇那样乱跑了。于是张骞决定，接下来从临洮往西北走，先到祁连山东头，力争绕过大沙漠，从匈奴与乌孙的交界处穿过去，然后直奔阿姆河。他们渡过黄河后悄悄进入河西，想按照汉武帝的计划，通过河西的匈奴地区，到西域去寻找月氏国。长城以外是匈奴的控制区，越往前走，离汉朝越远，就越危险了。偶尔碰上匈奴牧民，都用惊奇怀疑的目光注视着汉朝的使臣。为了避免麻烦和危险，张骞带着他的随员昼伏夜行，尽量躲开那些帐篷和羊群，避开大路走小路。但是，100多人的庞大队伍，想无声无息地穿过那广阔的地区是很难的。

那时候还没有指南针，在沙漠里行走，白天靠太阳定方向，晚上只能靠星星（主要是北斗星和北极星）定方向了。这天，在河西西部的沙漠里，阴云和灰雾遮蔽天日，看不见熟悉的星。张骞抬头寻找好几次，才从一块阴云的空隙里看到两颗星，这是北斗七星中的两颗。根据这两颗星，他立即定出了方向，也发觉自己走错了，原来他们朝着东北方向前进。于是张骞让大家赶紧转弯。

队伍向左转了一个大弯，朝着西北方向前进。在地平线上，有一颗星升上来了。张骞看了一会儿，发现这不是星星，而是灯火。他赶快传令让大家轻轻地绕过前面的灯火，不要被匈奴人发现。队伍继续向左转弯，不敢太快，也不敢太慢，默默地走着，每一个人的心情都非常紧

张。

忽然，有两个骑马的黑影向他们跑过来，嘴里大喊大叫，让他们停下来接受检查。张骞加了一鞭，全队都加快速度奔跑起来。两个匈奴人在后面追过来，要查问这不听指挥的究竟是什么人。他们靠近了汉使队伍的尾部，队伍里不知是谁张起了弓，对他们射过箭去。嗖的一声，一个匈奴人滚下马来，另外一个连忙逃走了。

队伍绕过了灯火，仍然向着西北方拼命飞奔。张骞真希望一条直线奔到月氏啊！

天亮了，太阳照射在背上，里面的衣服都被汗水浸湿了。他们脱去外面的衣服，身上冒着热气。太阳越晒越烫，温度很快升高，带的水很快喝光了。勉强拖到正午，张骞和伙伴们都被晒得头痛，眼睛发花，口里干渴，而且极度疲劳，昏昏欲睡。马也越走越慢，有几匹马一颠一跛地，简直走不动了。

忽然一个伙伴说，前面有水草地。大家抬头一看，前面地平线上出现了一片绿草地，有水池，似乎也有牛羊奔走。张骞想，水草地很可能有匈奴人，应该避开。但是他们实在坚持不下去了。张骞传令：大家悄悄地到前面水草地去弄点水喝，吃点干粮，尽量避免给匈奴兵发现。

张骞和伙伴们鼓足了勇气，打起精神继续前进，希望找到水草地休息。谁知向前走了一会儿，水草地忽然不见了。原来这只是海市蜃楼。

这时候，在后面的地平线上，腾起一阵灰雾，一队匈奴骑兵冲过来了。这是真正的人，不再是虚幻的景象了。张骞回头一看，感到形势危急。他左手握住缰绳和旌节，右手抽出宝剑，指挥全体伙伴准备进攻后面的追兵。

伙伴们掉转马头，伏在马上不动。匈奴骑兵越来越近了，用匈奴话大喊：“汉军投降。”等他们相隔只有百步左右时，张骞下令放箭，100多支箭像雨一样射向匈奴骑兵，许多匈奴骑兵从马上摔了下来。他率领部下鼓起勇气，拿了刀剑等武器向前猛冲，把匈奴骑兵冲得四散奔逃。但是张骞不敢恋战，叫大家不要追杀，再一次掉转马头，向西北前进。

敦煌莫高窟壁画生动展现了“海市蜃楼”的情景。

A mural painting of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang vividly illustrates the scene of a "mirage."

这时候，四面八方都有匈奴骑兵冲过来了。无数的乱箭射了过来，很多伙伴中箭牺牲，倒在马下。匈奴人的包围圈越来越小，张骞的马疲劳极了，前腿突然跪下去，把张骞摔下马来。一个匈奴骑兵飞也似地冲

过来，跳下马，一只脚踩在张骞背上，拿出绳子，把张骞牢牢地捆住了。

冲破匈奴的阻碍

张骞和他的同伴被匈奴兵押解着，骑着马向东北走，走了几天才到达匈奴王庭。王庭就是单于住的地方，当时的王庭在今天内蒙古呼和浩特市一带。

张骞出使西域历经险阻。
Zhang Qian encountered dangers and difficulties during his mission to the Western Region.

匈奴兵先叫张骞进单于的大帐幕，其余的人排队等着。张骞举着节，拖着脚镣向前走。当时匈奴的单于叫军臣，是老上单于的儿子。他听部下报告说抓住了一个汉朝的使臣和他的几个随员，十分高兴，决定亲自审讯，传令卫士把俘虏带进他的大帐内。

张骞上前一步，举起他的节，对军臣单于说：“我是汉朝的使臣，奉汉朝皇帝派遣，出使月氏国，路经贵国，被贵国骑兵拘留。请大王下令释放。”

军臣单于对张骞仔细看了一会儿，说：“月氏在我国的西北，汉朝怎么能派人横跨我国到月氏去呢？假如我要派人到南方的越国去，向你们借路，你们肯答应吗？”

张骞正要辩解，单于不等他开口，就指着张骞和后面排着队的被俘伙伴骂道：“你们擅自进入匈奴地区骚扰，杀害我大批战士，该当何罪？”

没有人回答，单于就恶狠狠地指着张骞说：“先把这个带头的抓出去做箭靶子，射他几个窟窿！”几个卫士立即扭住张骞，准备带走，张骞却巍然不动。

单于看到威胁没有作用，就走近张骞一步，语气温和地对张骞说：“不杀你也可以，只要你帮我们办点事，还可以给你做官——不比你在汉朝的官小。”

张骞昂头望着帐篷顶，傲然回答说：“我是汉朝的使臣，不做匈奴的官。”

经过一番审问和毒打，匈奴人又把张骞关押起来。后来把他交给一个贵族当奴隶，让他放牧几百头牛羊。几年后，军臣单于为了软化张骞，把一个匈奴女孩给张骞做了妻子，并把他们和甘父等随员都弄到靠近西域的西部，去给右贤王放羊。

新疆，帕米尔高原。
Xinjiang, Pamir.

到西域的距离一下子缩短了许多，逃跑的希望又在张骞的心中复活了——以前他也曾想到过逃跑，但无论是向南逃或向西逃，都必须穿越

匈奴人居住的2000多里（1里相当于500米）的地域，即使不被抓回来，也必定饿死在路上。而现在不一样了。

转眼间，到了张骞被俘的第11个春天。时光一天一天地过去了，张骞的任务却一直没有完成，怎么办啊？他望着手里的旌节。这根节，11年来他一直带在身边，牧羊时就把它当作鞭子，节上的三把牦牛毛已经脱落了不少。这旌节时时提醒张骞，决不能忘记自己出使月氏的重任。

张骞的匈奴妻子为他生下了一个男孩和一个女孩。匈奴人认为张骞不会逃跑了，放松了对他的看管，有时他出去放羊，几天也不去过问一下。张骞趁匈奴看守松懈的机会，联络了甘父等人，弄了点干粮，利用外出放牧作掩护，偷了右贤王的几匹骆驼、骏马，向西方逃去。

他们的队伍远不如11年前那样威武和整齐，带的礼物、武器全没有了。在上次的沙漠战斗中，牺牲了将近一半人，剩下的也一个个衣着破旧、面容黑瘦。但是，他们仍然满怀着找到月氏国的信心前进着。

张骞在月色下，回头细细搜寻远处的灯光，那里也许是他住的帐篷。他的妻子可能已经把羊奶挤好，等他回去吃晚饭。他的孩子想必正骑着马，在草原上找爸爸。为了保守秘密，他离开的时候，没有对妻子和孩子吐露一个字。他只有默默地为他们祈祷，掉头向前。

他们凭着仅有的干粮和水，不断地向西行进，沿途风餐露宿，迷了路，张骞就根据日月星辰来判明方向。在匈奴待了11年，他们已经习惯了匈奴人的生活方式，能说一口漂亮的匈奴话。不明底细的人，绝对不会认出他们是汉人的。因此，在穿越匈奴本土的千里草原和沙漠的行程中，张骞他们没有遇到什么大的麻烦和危险——匈奴人都把他们错当成自己人了。

他们的粮食本来就很少，为了多支持些日子，大家勒紧裤带，过着半饥半饱的日子。幸好依靠甘父百发百中的箭法，不时打到一两只飞鸟、黄羊或野兔，作为填饱肚子的食物。在有野菜可采时，他们就饱餐一顿。就这样，他们走出了千里塞北平原，进入了西域。

深入中亚的远征

经过艰苦跋涉，他们终于看到了一个硕大无比的湖——盐泽，即新疆罗布泊。张骞下令当晚就在这里住宿，乘着落日的余晖，他立即给大

家分配任务：有的搭帐篷，有的牧马，有的打猎，有的取水，有的生火。

盐泽附近的地上有一层浓浓的白霜，仔细看看，刮一点舔舔，才知道是盐碱。湖边长满了芦苇，取水的人穿过芦苇地，蹲在水边捧了一口水喝，又咸又苦。幸好有人在一条干涸的河沟里挖了一个坑，在坑里看到一点点水，舀了出来喝，大家才解了渴。这时有人拾来了干草枯叶、牛马骆驼的干粪，有人打起火石生了火，架锅子就烧起水来。还有人在芦苇丛中找到一堆野鸭蛋，先煮熟了给大家吃。有人在草丛里打到一头肥肥的野羊，可是因为锅子太小，不能煮羊肉，只得把羊肉割成一块块，放在火上烤着。这可是多少年来最丰盛的一顿晚餐。张骞和他的伙伴在湖边美美地睡了一觉，第二天继续打猎，除了充饥以外，还得有点储备。接着，他们绕过大湖北岸，继续向西前进。这里又是一片沙漠，他们在里面走了不远，忽然看见地平线上现出一座城楼。

罗布泊湖底盐碱地

Saline and alkaline land at the bottom of Lop Nur.

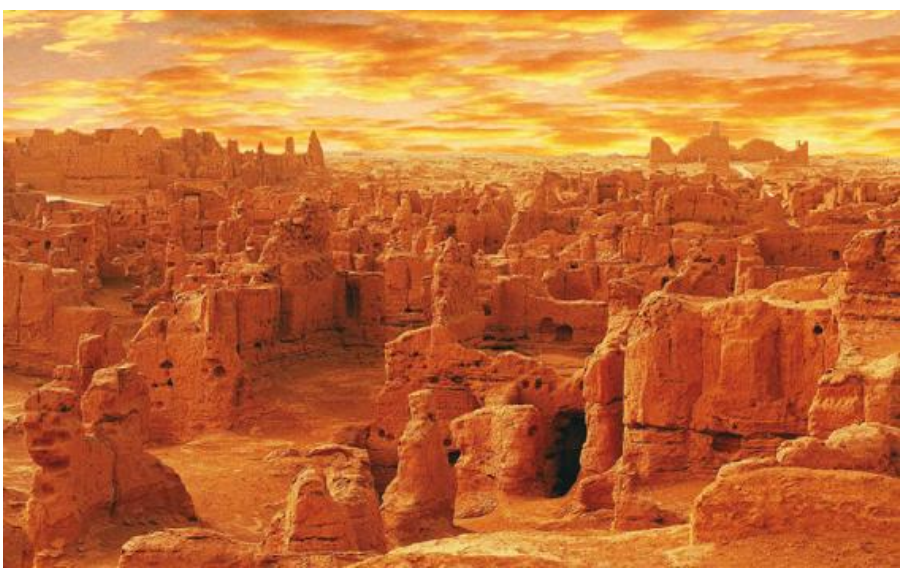
张骞赶紧询问路上的牧民，得知这就是楼兰国，有1.4万多人口，是西域中的大国。40多年前，匈奴人打到这里，占领了楼兰和西域的其余20多个国家。匈奴单于还派了个官员驻在楼兰，征税收粮。因为楼兰驻有匈奴军队，他们不能进去，就停留在湖边，问清了去月氏的路线之

后，就沿着塔里木盆地北部边缘前进。

从楼兰西行600里，便到了尉犁国（现新疆尉犁县）。这是一个小国，只有9000多人口，人们不仅牧放牛羊，还种植庄稼。张骞一行在这里补充了些粮食和水，又继续前进了。从尉犁西行500余里，就是西域的堂堂大国龟兹国（在今新疆库车县）。龟兹国不光人口有8万多，出产五谷，还能开采铜矿、冶炼铁器，展现了西域的文明程度和生产力发展的水平。龟兹西行400余里，是姑墨国（在今新疆阿克苏一带）。姑墨国在西域中也算大国了，人口2万多，过的是农牧兼半的生活。

20世纪初发掘的楼兰古国遗址

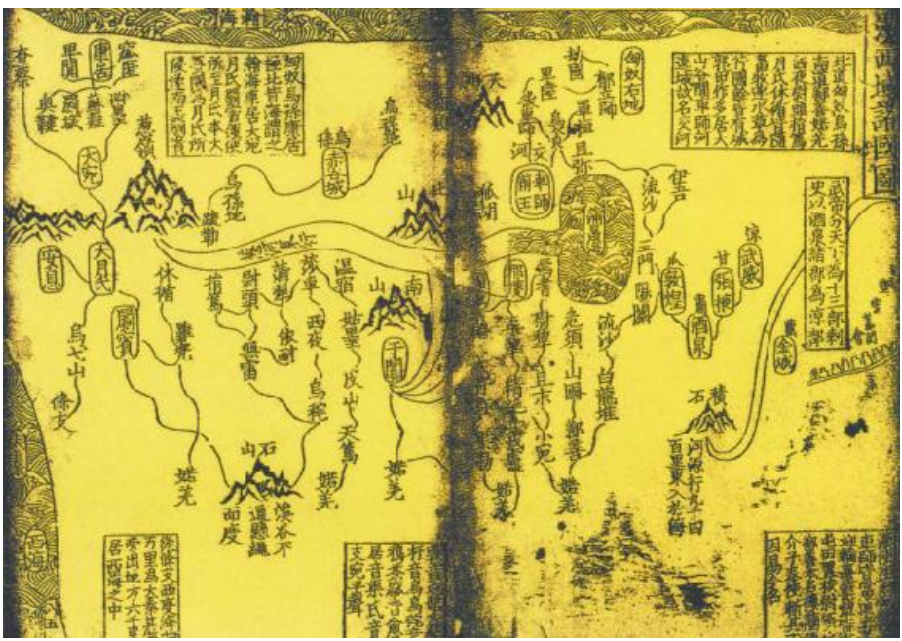
Ruins of the Ancient City Loulan unearthed at the beginning of 20th century.



车师国遗址，实为新疆吐鲁番交河故城。

Ruins of the state of Cheshi, actually the ancient city of Jiaohe in Turpan, Xinjiang.

再西行100多里，是一个小国温宿（在今新疆乌什附近），张骞他们在这里补充了粮食和水。从温宿西行600余里，是一个叫疏勒的国家（在今新疆喀什市附近），人口近2万。这里西、北、南三面都靠高山，从山上流下来的雪水汇积成溪流，灌溉着许多稻田，所以农业很发达。这里也是一个商业中心，西域南道和北道及葱岭（今帕米尔高原）西边各国来的商人，都在这儿汇集贸易，使得这里街市繁荣、买卖兴旺。张骞他们来到疏勒，看到城市里有些外国商人，通过翻译一打听，说是月氏就在西边，翻过葱岭就是。他们听了，高兴得手舞足蹈，经过了千难万险，他们就要到达目的地了。



西域诸国图

A sketch map of the Western Region.

他们离开疏勒，走了不远，就开始爬山，这山就是闻名于世的葱岭——因为山上长着许多野葱，它就得了这样的名字。葱岭上有三个重要的山口，沟通岭内外国家：北面的山口通大宛，西面的通月氏，南面的通身毒（今印度）。张骞他们本来只要从葱岭西面的山口西行2000多里，就可以直达月氏的首都了。可是他们走错了路，从葱岭北面的山口西行，一下闯入了有20万人的大宛国（今乌兹别克费尔干纳一带）。

张骞他们惊奇地发现，大宛的风光不仅与汉朝大不相同，而且与西

域中的都市国家也不一样。这里田野里长着大片大片的紫花苜蓿，山沟、路旁、院子中都立着木架，上面爬满了葡萄。这些都是张骞他们以前没有看到过的。大宛人住的房子和中国房子也明显不同，全是砖木结构，没有屋檐，都爱造成尖顶。大宛人的外貌也很新鲜：鼻子高耸，眼睛深陷，胡须长而整齐。

大宛人对张骞这些衣服破烂、头发蓬松、又黑又瘦的人，也感到十分新奇。一大群人跟在后面看热闹。张骞用汉语和他们打招呼，他们全都听不懂。张骞改用匈奴话，他们中马上有人听懂了，就和张骞交谈起来。他们知道张骞是汉朝的使臣后，脸上立即露出了敬佩的神情，一边赞叹汉朝是个富饶美丽的大国，不仅人口众多，而且物产十分丰富；一边还说那里有一种天虫，能吐一种丝，织成锦帛，做成衣裳，既柔软又暖和，既轻巧又光滑，还可以绣上各种各样的花，十分好看，真是一种宝物。

张骞听了，就给他们解释："这种虫叫作蚕，我们汉人很久以前就开始饲养了。喂它一种树叶，它会吐出一种丝，把丝缫了，织成帛，叫作丝绸，就可以做衣裳、被褥了。"

傍晚时分，张骞和他的随员们来到了一个有1000多人口的小城。这里是葱岭内外的商人会合贸易的地方，所以街市繁荣，商业发达。早已得到汉使到来的消息的当地官员，带了翻译来见张骞，同他们进行了热情的交谈，并答应把他出使的事情向大宛国王报告，然后带他们去理发、洗澡、换衣，热情地招待他们吃饭。在小城经过一夜的休息，张骞等人都消除了疲劳，一个个显得年轻多了。第二天，他们精神振奋地踏上了去大宛都城的旅程。

大宛国王早就仰慕汉朝的富饶和文明，对张骞一行十分友好。张骞在这里吃到了汉地没有的胡萝卜、大蒜、芝麻，看到了著名的大宛汗血宝马和苜蓿、葡萄。临行时，大宛王又派人把他们送到康居国（今阿姆河以北、咸海与巴尔喀什湖之间）。

大宛

大宛，古代中亚国名，位于帕米尔高原西麓，锡尔河上、中游，当今乌兹别克斯坦费尔干纳盆地。原始居民似以塞种人为主。古希腊时代，亚历山大东征，于锡尔河畔兴建"极东亚历山大城"，

塞琉古王朝时改建为安条克城，似均未东向深入大宛境内。但在大夏最盛时，尤其在欧提德姆斯北征时，则占有了该地，并按希腊方式在各村镇修建坞堡。

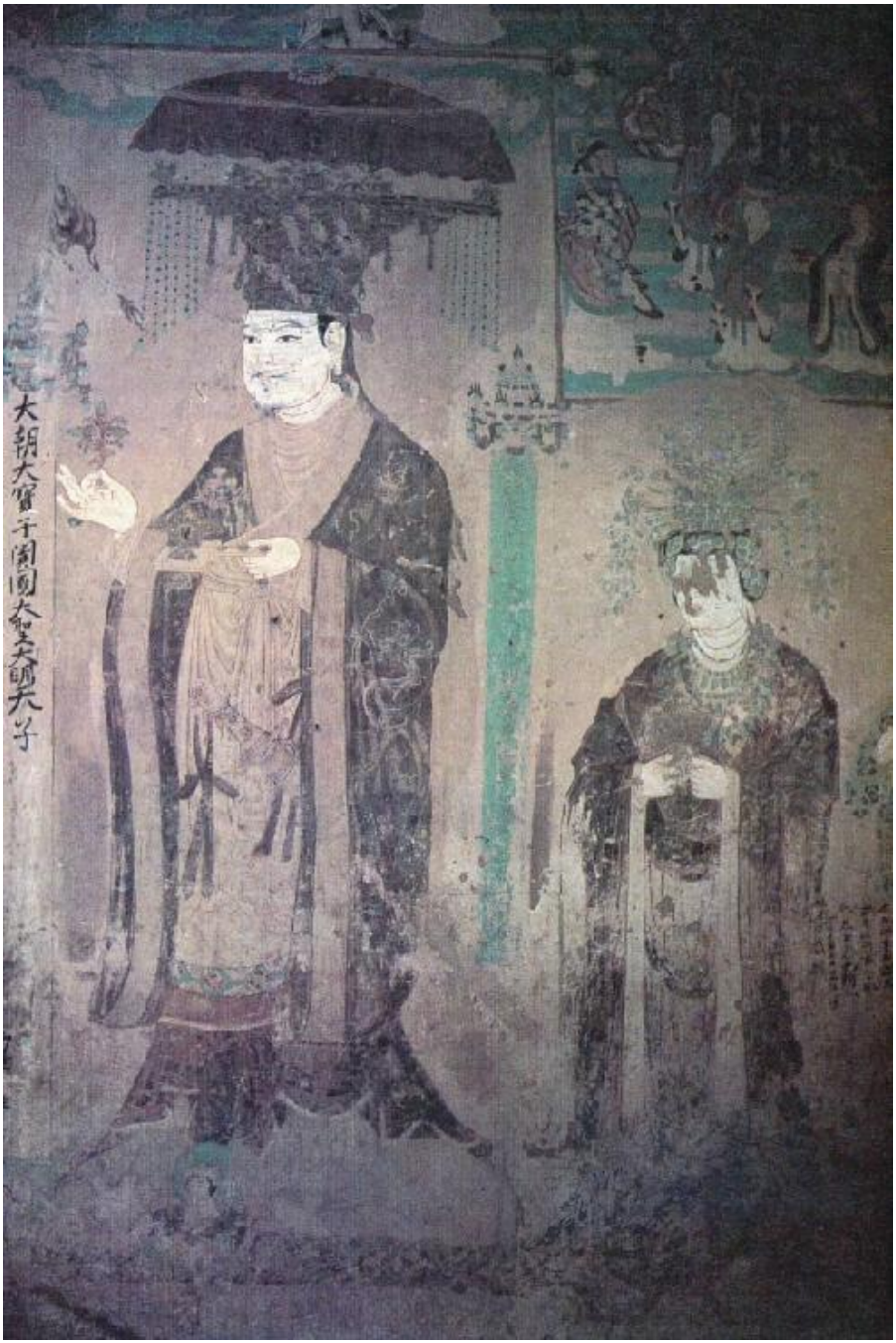
汉武帝时，张骞通西域，于公元前129至前128年间抵达帕米尔以西，首先到达大宛。据他归国后说，当时大宛大小属邑有70多个，人口有几十万，是一个农牧业兴盛的国家，产稻、麦、葡萄、苜蓿，尤以出汗血马著称。大宛西北邻康居，西南邻大月氏、大夏，东北临乌孙，东行经帕米尔的特洛克山口可达疏勒，在当时东西交通上占有相当重要的位置。

汉武帝听说大宛出产好马，于太初元年（前104）命使臣携带金帛去换取，由于双方意见冲突，换马不成，使臣也被杀害。武帝怒，命大将军李广利率兵往讨。初征不利，至大宛东境郁成即战败。武帝命发兵运粮再西讨，于太初四年攻克其首都，杀大宛王毋寡，另立国王，从此大宛服属汉朝。

大宛国的东、南、北三面临山，被葱岭包围，西面却是大片的草原沙漠。发源于葱岭的溪流汇集成一条大河（今锡尔河），流经大宛国，最后注入咸海。张骞一行渡过大河，穿过沙漠草原，向西南方走去。经过很多天的劳累行走，他们到了康居国的首都卑阗。康居国和匈奴一样是游牧国家，人们也都住在帐篷里。张骞在一座特大的帐篷里拜见了康居国王，康居国王对张骞的英勇远征十分敬佩，给予热情的款待。康居国当时受着匈奴的威胁，匈奴使者常来居住，对张骞他们很不方便。再加上他们去月氏的心情十分急切，不愿意在康居多留。于是第三天，在康居国王指派的向导的带领下，张骞和他的随员们离开了康居。友好的康居人一直护送他们到月氏国。现在张骞终于有机会来完成他的使命了。

在大月氏的见闻

走了好些天，他们到了一个农牧业发达的山里国家，这就是张骞他们牺牲了许多伙伴、寻找了11年的月氏了，张骞因此激动得掉下了热泪。月氏国的气候比匈奴温和湿润，山上树木青葱，成群的牛羊在坡上放牧，平坝里良田相接，麦浪翻滚，勤劳的人民正在田间劳动。



于阗国王供养人像，五代十国时期敦煌莫高窟壁画，显示了于阗国人物的风貌。于阗是丝绸之路上有悠久历史的古国，在近新疆和田一带。放牧，平坝里良田相接，麦浪翻滚，勤劳的人民正在田间劳动。

A portrait of the provider of the king of Khotan, a Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period mural painting of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, showing the style and

features of people in the state of Khotan, an ancient state on the Silk Road with a long history near Hotian, Xinjiang.

国王50多岁了，是被匈奴冒顿单于杀掉的前月氏王的儿子。张骞拿着旌节，向月氏国王行了礼，对他说："大王，我是汉朝的使节，皇上要我向大王表示敬意。现在汉朝正在准备反击匈奴，皇上特派我出使贵国，希望月汉两国能联合起来，对付我们共同的敌人匈奴。"国王听完张骞的话，感到十分高兴，觉得张骞一行太不容易了，从汉朝来到大月氏有1万多里路。他在祁连山的时候，就很仰慕汉朝的富强。虽然和汉朝人有过交往，但两国朝廷却没有联系过，现在搬到了万里之远的西方，想不到在这里会见了汉朝使者，赶紧又问起了汉朝的情形。

张骞回答说："我们汉朝比以前更加强大了。现在的皇上有雄才大略，他决心集中全国的人力物力，征调几十万大军，向匈奴发动反击。这次派我来，就是希望和贵国结盟。希望大王从西边向匈奴发动进攻，使匈奴两面受敌。将来打败匈奴后，欢迎你们回到祁连山老家去，和汉朝世世代代友好相处。"

月氏王停顿了一下，说匈奴杀害了他的父母，逼得他们离开老家，迁居万里，好不容易搬到了天山。刚在那里住了十几年，匈奴又支持乌孙来攻打，他们只得再次迁居避难。汉朝要大举反击匈奴，实在太好了，也替月氏人出口气，报仇雪耻。不过，要他们出兵配合，实在太难，因为距匈奴太远，中间还要经过很多国家。要他们撤回祁连山，也很不容易。月氏王表达了对汉朝皇帝的善意，但表示他们有难处，希望汉朝能够体谅。

张骞沉思了一下，对月氏国王说："匈奴是我们月汉两国的宿敌，给我们两国造成了深重的灾难，打败匈奴，符合两国的利益。你们出兵攻打匈奴，因为路途遥远，当然有些困难，不过却是可以克服的。我们这次出使贵国，就曾被匈奴扣留了十多年，但我们终于逃出来了。"

月氏国王听了也很受感动，说："那你们可吃尽了千辛万苦，这更体现了汉朝对我国的深情厚谊。不过出兵搬家都是大事，我得和大臣们好好商量一下。你们刚到，要多休息休息，然后请到我国各地去看看。"

随后，月氏国王就命令官员们设宴欢迎汉朝贵宾。宴会在一个地上铺着毛毡的大帐篷里举行。筵席十分丰盛，大盘的牛肉、羊肉，大碗的葡萄酒，大盘的面食，肉和面食都加了葱蒜等佐料，还有些叫不出名称

的蔬菜，这是张骞他们以前没见过的。大月氏的官员解释说，那颗颗滚圆的是豌豆，那稍为扁平的是蚕豆，那一片片清脆可口的是黄瓜，这些都是月氏国的特产。张骞他们在月氏国逗留了一年，学到了不少知识，了解了许多情况。

新疆喀什附近的莫尔佛塔遗址
The Pagoda relic in the vicinity of Kashi, Xinjiang.

原来很久以前这里有一个国家，名叫大夏国。在200年前（公元前323年），希腊马其顿国王亚历山大大帝率兵东征，首先灭亡了比希腊领土大几十倍的波斯帝国，然后攻占了大夏国，建立了希腊人的大夏王国，发行铸有国王头像的银币。亚历山大又继续东进南下，到达印度河，在印度西部（今巴基斯坦）建立了希腊人的政权。后来，居住在祁连山的月氏人西迁阿姆河，赶跑了住在这里的塞种人，引起了世界史上的第一次民族大迁徙。塞种人在受到月氏人打击后，分三路逃跑：一路进入安息东北部，杀死了前来镇压的安息王，在东伊朗高原定居下来；一路南下大夏国，把那里的希腊统治者赶到印度的旁遮普；另一路西进，闯入了欧洲平原。月氏人又继续南下，进入大夏，将那里的塞种人赶到兴都库什山以南的喀布尔河谷。塞种人便建立了罽宾王国，西与安

息接壤，东与旁遮普的希腊人王国毗邻，北以兴都库什山为界，与月氏人对峙。月氏人就在兴都库什山北面建立了大月氏国，以区别于仍留在祁连山的少数月氏人。大夏国虽然灭亡了，但大夏人还在，有100多万，比月氏人还多。

大月氏立国后，把全国分为五部，立了五个翕侯分头管理，还学着希腊人，发行刻有国王头像的银币。月氏人也种植农作物，不过没有铁器，耕作粗糙，产量不高。他们从汉朝带来的桃、李等水果，很快传到了伊朗和印度。月氏人还建筑城市，当时正在阿姆河以南建立都城蓝氏城。不过他们的房屋不是安息式的平顶房，而是由从希腊抢来的奴隶工匠修建的大宛式的尖顶房。

大多数月氏人善于经商，经常远走别国，贩卖货物。月氏商业也很发达，吸引着来自各国的商人，成为当时东西方贸易的一个中转站。在月氏，张骞接触了很多国家的商人，和他们进行了亲切交谈，促进了相互了解，建立了友谊。在和安息商人交谈中，张骞知道他们国家也很大，文字从左向右横写在羊皮上，不像汉朝那样从上到下竖写在竹片上。他也接触过奄蔡（在今黑海一带）人，知道了那里盛产貂皮。他碰到的条支（今波斯湾西北，叙利亚一带）人说，他们那里产一种大鸟，可以当马骑，生的蛋有一只瓮那么大。他还看过条支国的幻人（即魔术师）口里吐火、吞刀等表演。身毒的商人告诉他，身毒盛产孔雀、大象，打仗时士兵们还骑象作战。身毒和汉朝早就有贸易关系，身毒商人经常把汉朝的蜀布和邛竹拿到月氏等国出售。张骞还听说在条支的西方有个文明高度发达的犁靬国（又名大秦国，即古罗马帝国），在犁靬国的西面，还有许许多多的国家。

大夏

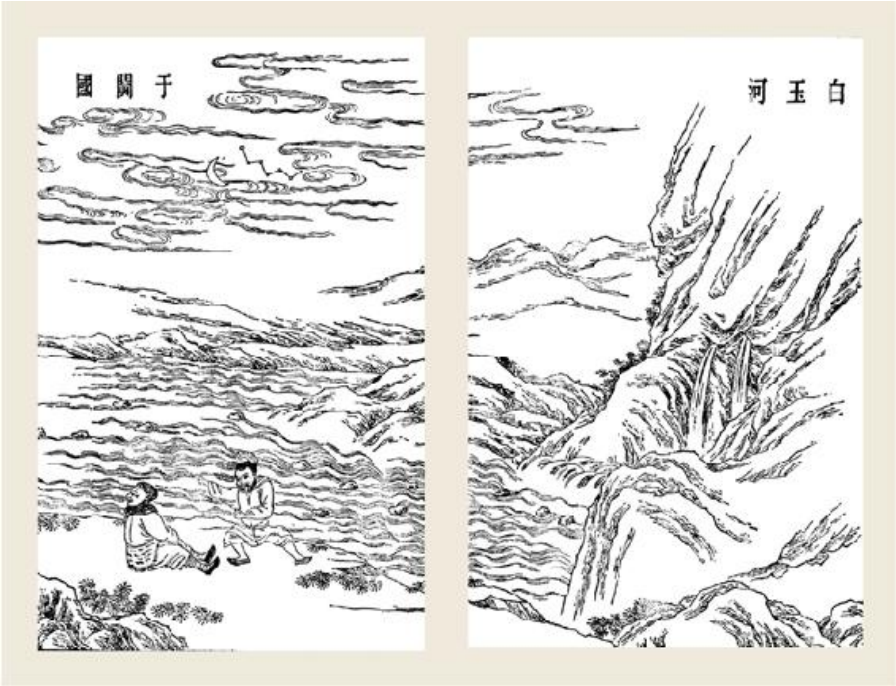
大夏主要指阿姆河（古希腊称Oxus）以南、兴都库什山（古希腊称Paropamisus）以北地区，继承了被称为那末伽（Namazga）的阿姆河文明，现存考古文物有一些不超过15厘米高的距今4000多年的小头大身女性雕像。大夏地区被希腊征服以后成为一个中亚古国。大夏即巴克特里亚之汉译，是雅利安人的故乡，曾流行起源于伊朗的琐罗亚斯德教。

看来世界大得似乎没有尽头，远远不是汉朝人所想象的那样：汉朝在天下的中央，东南面是海，北面是沙漠，西面是高山，汉朝的四周住着一些落后的少数民族。相反，世界之大出乎汉朝人的意料。这次出使，张骞才明白天外有天、国外有国。

带着这种惊讶和感慨，张骞和他的随员深感这次出使收获不少，大开了眼界。可是事不凑巧，他发现月氏已经安居乐业，不再想对匈奴进行报仇雪恨了。劝说月氏与汉朝联合攻打匈奴的任务没有完成，张骞只得带着随员们返回汉朝。月氏王也不挽留，送了他们一些土特产和钱币，让他们回国。

打开异域的窗口

张骞从月氏人那里探知了一条回国的新道，就是从疏勒沿着昆仑山北面东行，在盐泽（罗布泊）附近和北道汇合。这条路被称为南道。南道与北道隔着一个大沙漠（塔克拉玛干沙漠），因此匈奴兵极少到南道去。走这条道，对张骞一行来说，比走北道要安全多了。他们向东翻越了冰封雪盖的葱岭，走过街市繁荣的疏勒，然后向东南方前进，来到昆仑山北麓，沿南道东行。



《天工开物：采宝石》，记载了新疆于阗白玉河玉石开采的情况。
Exploitation of the Works of Nature: Mining Precious Stones records the mining of jade in Baiyu River in Khotan, Xinjiang.

南道也是东西方贸易的一条重要的商路，在匈奴势力扩展到北道前，它没有北道热闹。但是，自从匈奴控制了北道后，它立刻变得热闹起来。葱岭以西很多国家的商人，为了避免货物被匈奴人抽税和没收，都改走南道了。

新疆启浪古城，是丝绸之路北道的必经之地，汉代从龟兹国到疏勒国，东来西往的商队、使者、军事人员，在此经过补给粮草、检查后始可前行。
The ancient city of Qilang is on the North Route of the Silk Road. In the Han Dynasty, trade caravans, envoys and military personnel going from the state of Qiuci to the state of Shule must be replenished with provisions and be checked here before going further.

在归途中，他先到了南亚的大夏国。他在大夏停留了一年之久，详细地考察了这个国家，还派代表远赴粟特（大约在阿姆河、锡尔河之间的泽拉夫善河流域，在今塔吉克斯坦和乌兹别克斯坦一带）和安息（前247—公元226，由安息人建立的一个讲希腊语的帝国，地属伊朗高原）。继而又沿着塔里木盆地南缘返回，与出发时走了一条不同的道路。

从疏勒往东南行500里，是莎车国（在今新疆莎车县附近），人口1.6万多，算得上西域中的大国了。莎车国的人民既从事畜牧业，又种植庄稼。这里还出产一种青玉，远近闻名。

从莎车东行300余里，便到了西域中的另一个大国于阗（在今新疆和田县）。这里有人口2万，人民除放牧以外，也会种田。附近的山里出产著名的于阗玉石，玉匠们把玉石雕琢成各种精致的器皿和精美的工艺品，销售到很远的地方。

再东行400余里，是一个大国扜弥（在今新疆于田县），人口有两万多。人们已经学会炼铁，张骞亲眼看到他们使用的一个直径3尺（合1

米）的炼铁炉，铁匠们正在锻造铁镰、铁斧等工具。

这里人民的容貌和汉人不大相同，个个高鼻深目黑发。女人们把头发梳成许多小辫，盘在头上，手指上带着铜指环，脖子上戴着铜项链。张骞在扜弥还惊奇地发现了一种蓝色印花棉布，印着龙、狮、人物等图案。

从扜弥东行1000余里，是一个小国，名叫且末（在今新疆且末县），人口只有1000多。从且末东行700里，就到了张骞他们上次经过的楼兰国了。在都城扜泥城里，他们休息了几天，一方面补充食物和水，一方面打听关于祖国和匈奴的情况。一个旅舍的负责人对他们说，汉朝和匈奴的大战已经打了三四年了，汉朝初步占了上风，夺回了被匈奴人侵占多年的河套地区。

张骞听了非常高兴，觉得他们应该赶紧回去报告情况，武帝一定盼望他们的消息。但是，越向东走离匈奴越近了，为了不被匈奴人活捉了去，张骞决定改走祁连山以南羌族人居住的地方。

他们离开了楼兰，向东南前进，准备翻越祁连山，由南麓回国。但就在连绵千里的祁连山中，他们不幸又碰上了大队匈奴骑兵，再次被抓，做了俘虏，被押到了几千里以北的单于王庭。对此，张骞心里十分难过，他并不是怕死，而是以为没有机会把他在西方的新奇发现报告皇帝了。

《张骞出使西域凿空图》，今人绘。

Picture of Zhang Qian Opening a Way on a Mission to the Western Region drawn by a contemporary.

张骞再一次当了俘虏的消息很快传开了。他的匈奴妻子知道了，又悲又喜，带着儿女找到了张骞。一家人就相依为命，过着半饥半饱的奴隶生活。过了好久，张骞打听到了甘父就在附近放牧，但不知道其他的伙伴流落到哪里去了。张骞一天天苦苦地等着，一次次地寻找着回国的机会。

一年多后，军臣单于病死了，他的儿子于单太子正要继位，太子的弟弟伊稚斜忽然带领大军杀到，来争夺单于的宝座。于单太子哪里肯让，双方的军队在单于庭附近激战起来。所有的匈奴人都投入了内战，到处是死尸和鲜血。

看管张骞、甘父的匈奴人也为他们的主人卖命去了。正在放羊的张骞趁着这种混乱，带着甘父和妻子逃跑了。他们一行三人，不顾命地向南狂奔，绕过帐篷密集的地方，躲开杀红了眼的匈奴人，渐渐地把喊杀声抛在后面。当时正是隆冬季节，纷纷扬扬的大雪为他们掩盖了可供匈奴人追踪的脚印。

公元前126年，张骞和他的随从甘父终于回到了长安。这次出使历时13年，整个使团回来时只剩两个人，冒险的出使经历震动了长安。在这十几年里，不管遇到什么艰难险阻，那支代表汉朝神圣使命的“节”，始终没有丢失。当张骞把那支几乎脱光毛的“节”双手奉还汉武帝时，汉武帝非常感动。张骞说明了大月氏不肯出兵攻打匈奴的原因，禀告了使团两次被俘、成员死亡和失散的经过，还详细陈述了13年来他所周游的西方各国的情形。武帝大开眼界，汉朝人大开眼界：原来世界竟这么大！为了奖赏张骞他们艰苦卓绝的西行探险，武帝给张骞封了一个叫太中大夫的官，把甘父封为奉命君。

虽然张骞并没有成功地完成使命，但他了解到，除了月氏之外，中亚还有大宛、大夏、康居以及其他五六个重要国家，例如安息以及在安息以西几千里的条支国；他观察了印度北部的生活状况，注意到在大夏有中国货。他向汉武帝报告了与西部诸国往来的可能性，并指出和这些地区通商的潜在价值，以及与其他民族结盟的好处。汉朝政府非常重视他所搜集的各种重要情报，这些资料不仅涉及他所经过的国家，而且还涉及沿途所听说的很多地区的情况，其中包括一些对汉朝来说还完全陌生的地区。

III

Thoroughfares through Chang'an

Exploring the Passageway of the Southwest

Zhang Qian had been named an official, but since he had not successfully completed his task of persuading the Yuezhi to form an alliance with the Han during his first mission, he still felt troubled. The Han were now engaged in a fierce fight against the Xiongnu. If he were able to start a second battle line in the west to divert the Xiongnu, that would be great. The road to the Western Region, however, passed through areas controlled by the Xiongnu, so it was too dangerous. Might it be possible to begin a new road that would avoid the areas controlled by the Xiongnu? He thought it over long and hard, unable to eat or sleep. One day, he suddenly thought of a conversation that he had with a Sindh merchant while he was in Bactria, remembering the Shu clothing and Qiong bamboo that he was selling there. He cheered up all at once. He went to the palace at once, and asked to speak to the emperor. He told him of a plan to open a new road leading to the Western Region, and spoke of the Han Dynasty products that he had seen while in Bactria.

Upon hearing what Zhang Qian said, Emperor Wu asked in amazement, "There are Shu clothing and Qiong bamboo in Bactria? Are you sure you're not mistaken?"

Zhang Qian said that he certainly was not mistaken. The Shu clothing that he saw was the good quality linen, soft and smooth, that he often wore as a child. The Qiong bamboo was from the Qionglai Mountains in Sichuan, with long nodes. It was solid, while other kinds of bamboo were hollow.

Emperor Wu was now even more amazed. How did the goods of Sichuan end up in Bactria?

Zhang Qian said, "I've spoken to Sindh merchants before. They said that Sindh is southwest of Sichuan and southeast of Bactria. It's near the sea, the terrain is flat there, and the climate is hot. Their soldiers ride elephants into battle. Bactria is 12,000 *li* west of the Han Empire, and thousands of *li* from Sindh. If the Sindh are able to buy things from Sichuan, then it must not be too far from Sichuan. If we take the northwestern road to the Western Region, we must pass through Xiongnu, which is too dangerous. If we depart through Sichuan, on a new path through the southwest, and cross through Sindh to reach Bactria, then we can bypass Xiongnu."

Emperor Wu was extremely pleased to hear this, and immediately put Zhang Qian in charge of organizing the exploration of this new road.

Zhang Qian quickly organized a group to explore the way from Sichuan to Sindh. In May of the year 122 BC, he sent out a group led by Wang Ranyu to Jianwei Prefecture in Sichuan. From there, Wang Ranyu dispatched four groups to explore paths leading to Sindh from different directions. This road was dangerous with high mountains to no end, some covered with forest, and some covered with snow year-round. There was also a large river with deep waters and strong currents that no boat could cross. Wild animals would often appear, and thick mist would often impair one's vision. Three of the groups all went in over a thousand *li*, but were forced to return mid-way through, due to barriers from local tribes, rivers, or forests. The fourth group continued south the whole way, crossing over countless mountains until they made it to a flat, densely populated area, where they saw a large, crystal-clear lake (current-day Dian Lake in Yunnan). It was like spring there all year, with a mild climate and fertile soil, making it rich in produce. It was a richly endowed nation called Dian. The Han explorers inquired, and found out that the king of Dian was Dang Qiang, and was a descendant of the Chu state General Zhuang

Jiao. During the Warring States Period, Zhuang Jiao was ordered by King Wei of Chu to lead troops through the state of Yelang (modern-day western Guizhou) to this place. Later, Qin troops severed communication between Zhuang Jiao and the Chu state. Zhuang Jiao could not return to Chu, so he changed his way of dressing and lifestyle to match that of the local minority and established the state of Dian. Upon learning this, the Han envoy immediately sought out King Dang Qiang to ask him for his support.

Dang Qiang could still speak Chinese, and upon seeing the guests from his homeland, he was extremely excited. He spoke to them at great length about the situation in Dian, and asked all sorts of questions about the Han Dynasty with much concern. Dang Qiang held a grand reception for the Han delegates, as though hosting old friends from his hometown. The Han delegates spoke of their mission, and asked Dang Qiang for help. Dang Qiang agreed right away, saying, "This Singh that you want to go to might be a country that's about 2,000 *li* away from Dian to the southwest. The terrain there is flat and low, the climate is very hot, and they ride elephants when they go into battle. Don't worry, I will certainly send someone to lead you there."

The group of Han explorers set off from Dian, heading west in search of Sindh, accompanied by the Dian guide. Before long, they reached an area where a minority people lived, high in the mountains. These people were still living as tribesmen at the time, and were wary of these outsiders who spoke an unknown language, fearing that they would harm them. They did not allow the Han men to pass. The Han men had no way of explaining, and had no choice but to turn west to bypass them. However, when they arrived in another area, they were blocked again. Some of the people groups living there even tried to kill them. All they could do was turn around and go back to where they started. Dang Qiang maintained a positive attitude. Not to be discouraged, he sent them out again, this time going in another direction to Singh. They continued making many of these kinds of

exploratory trips for a year. Each time, they had to turn back around somewhere along the way. Wang Ranyu had no choice but to lead the men back to Chang'an, and reported to Zhang Qian and Emperor Wu of Han.

In the end, a new route via Sichuan was not able to lead them to Bactria. Zhang Qian had come upon a major setback. A year later, he was faced with yet another significant setback, which was something that happened in 121 BC. The imperial court ordered Zhang Qian to lead a cavalry of 10,000 men and form an easterly attack on the Xiongnu together with the famous general Li Guang. They were to advance on different routes, and then at a specified time, join forces at an assigned place. Zhang Qian, set upon a victory, changed his men's route without permission, taking a long way around and arriving at the meeting place two days late. Because of this, General Li Guang was surrounded by the Xiongnu, and suffered a devastating loss of men. Zhang Qian was able to save Li Guang, but they were unable to fight the Xiongnu army. According to the Han military law, Zhang Qian had to be executed. Eventually, he saved himself from death by paying a very large sum of money, but his position as an official and his noble title were taken away. He became an ordinary citizen.

The Second Mission to the Western Region

After Zhang Qian's first mission to the Western Region, the great Han generals Wei Qing and Huo Qubing gained victory over the Xiongnu in battle two times, around 121 BC and 119 BC, driving the Xiongnu out of the Chinese border. It was enormously crippling for the Xiongnu cavalry, and they would never again be able to invade the Han Dynasty on a large scale. Until that point, the Han had only been able to make any decisive victories over the Xiongnu when they were defending themselves. The Xiongnu no longer had power over the Hexi Corridor or the Qilian Mountain area, and now the road to

the Western Region was no longer blocked. These new circumstances reminded Emperor Wu of the Western Region and Zhang Qian.

Emperor Wu thought once more of what Zhang Qian had said: There are many ancient civilizations in the Western Region. We should do what we can to tackle the Xiongnu together with them. There are many rare products in the Western Region. We should bring them back to the Han Empire to enrich people's lives. There is a need for Han ironware and silk in the Western Region. We can do business with them.

He was determined to speak individually with Zhang Qian, to see if he might be able to go to the Western Region again. He sent someone to Zhang Qian, who was now just a common man, to ask him to go to the palace. Upon seeing Emperor Wu of Han, Zhang Qian was extremely excited, guessing that the emperor wanted to speak with him about the Western Region. Emperor Wu laughed and nodded his head. Sure enough, he wanted to send Zhang Qian to the Western Region once more. He asked Zhang Qian which countries were best. Zhang Qian answered, "There is a great nation to the north of the Tianshan Mountains called Wusun. It has a population of over 60,000 people and they are enemies of the Xiongnu. Why don't I go to Wusun this time?" Emperor Wu asked, "The Wusun used to be in good relations with the Xiongnu. How is it that they have now become enemies again?" Zhang Qian explained, "The Wusun used to live beside the Qilian Mountains with the Yuezhi. At one point, in a competition for grassland, they were defeated by the Yuezhi, and their king was slain. The Wusun, wandering in exile, entered Xiongnu territory, and the king's youngest son Lie Jiaomi was adopted by the Xiongnu Chanyu. The prince grew up to be a man skilled in martial prowess, and went into battle with Laoshang Chanyu many times, giving much to the military service. Laoshang Chanyu gave him a Xiongnu girl from a noble family to be his wife, and put him in charge of overseeing the Wusun people living in Xiongnu. After Laoshan Chanyu died, Lie Jiaomi's power grew even more. He did not wish to

resign himself to being ruled by the Xiongnu. He requested permission from the successive chanyu to lead troops in an attack on the Yuezhi people at the Tianshan Mountains, to avenge his parents' death. Lie Jiaomi successfully defeated the Yuezhi, driving them out of Tianshan, and he settled in that area. Before long, Lie Jiaomi had established the state of Wusun, crowning himself Kunmo (or king), and no longer paid tribute to the Xiongnu. Junchen Chanyu was infuriated. He sent troops on horseback to attack the Wusun kunmo. Kunmo demonstrated his strength by defeating the Xiongnu troops. This was how the Wusun and the Xiongnu went from being friendly to being enemies.

Zhang Qian proposed that he go to persuade Wusun Kunmo to establish an alliance with the Han Dynasty. The Wusun could return to their old homeland in the Qilian Mountains and overcome the Xiongnu together with the Han. Such a strike would greatly handicap the Xiongnu. The Wusun would pledge their allegiance to the Han. With the news of the Han's recent victory over the Xiongnu, the Wusun would be able to bring in their neighboring states such as Dayuan, Kangju, and Yuezhi under the Han Empire's control.

To show the importance that he placed on this mission and the faith that he had in Zhang Qian, Emperor Wu of Han designated Zhang Qian as the military officer in charge of the security of the royal palace. In the year 115 BC, the second diplomatic mission to the Western Region departed. Never before had there been a team of this size, numbering three hundred men in total, with more than ten deputy envoys in addition to Zhang Qian, the head envoy. They traveled with six hundred horses, including three hundred for the men to ride upon, and another three hundred to carry food, supplies, and tents. The horses also carried many valuable goods, including sparkling ironware and golden, shiny silk. Over ten thousand heads of cattle and sheep followed behind, moving forward with the vast and mighty team.

The circumstances under which this mission took place were very different from those of the previous mission. Since the Han had taken

back the Yellow River Bend and Qilian Mountains, the right-flank Xiongnu kings Hun Xie and Xiu Tu surrendered to the Han, and their territory also came under Han control. In 121 BC, the same year that king Hun Xie fell to the Han, Emperor Wu of Han established Wuwei and Jiuquan Prefectures on his newly recaptured land, and established the Yumen and Yangguan Passes west of Dunhuang. Yumen Pass was established specifically to handle incoming and outgoing traffic to the Western Region along the Northern Route. Yangguan was established to handle such traffic along the Southern Route. In addition to moving over 70,000 residents east of Tong Pass who suffered flood to the two prefectures of Wuwei and Jiuquan, Emperor Wu of Han also extended the Great Wall from Shuofang Prefecture to Yuemen Pass in Dunhuang Prefecture. In doing so, the western end of the Great Wall was moved from Lintao to Yumen, moving over one thousand kilometers west all at once. Longxi Prefecture no longer looked the way it had twenty years earlier, when it was the western border of the Han Empire. It had now become the supporting base behind Wuwei and Dunhuang.

Therefore, Zhang Qian's mission was different this time. There was no need to proceed cautiously, hiding by day and moving stealthily at night as there was last time. They did all that they could to demonstrate their power, crossing the Yellow River at Jincheng (now Lanzhou), passing through the towering Qilian Mountains at Wuwei, and exiting through Yumen Pass. They went around the vast Luobu Lake, passed through the desert with its blowing yellow sand, went through the city-states of the Western Region, and crossed the eternally snow-capped northern section of the Congling Mountains. Along the way, they burned impressions of the strength, abundance, and friendliness of the Han Empire deep into the memory of all those they encountered. A passionate movement began among the rulers of the Western Region city-states as they turned their allegiance from the Xiongnu to the Han. One after another, they sent their princes and other young nobles to the Han capital of Chang'an to learn from them, in this way demonstrating their desires to submit to the authority of

the Han Dynasty.

After many difficult days of travel, Zhang Qian and his men finally arrived at the vast, hilly grasslands of Wusun. The Wusun state was located in the area of Tian Lake, northwest of the Tianshan Mountains (today's Lake Issyk Kul in Kazakhstan). The climate there was quite cold, but there was more rainfall there than on the southern side of the Tianshan Mountains. It was a fine land, with sloping hills, green pine trees, and lush pastures.

In addition to having the conquering Wusun people with blue eyes and red beards, the state of Wusun also included the yellow-skinned Yuezhi people and the white-skinned Saka people, who had been conquered. In fact, there were more Yuezhi and Saka people in Wusun than Wusun people. They spoke different languages, but lived in the same type of tents and had the same nomadic lifestyle. The Wusun people were valiant warriors, and their war horses were known around the world, and Wusun was referred to as "the state of good horses." Thousands and thousands of horses roamed their vast pastures, galloping in the wind.

The news of the enormous Han team's arrival shook the entire state of Wusun. The Wusun inhabitants came out to the streets, young and old, to watch them pass. They spoke to each other all at once in different languages, discussing the event and expressing astonishment and greetings to the group. The Wusun king sent an envoy to the edges of town to meet them. Led by the king's envoy, Zhang Qian and his men arrived at the Wusun capital city, Chigu (near today's IshNatick Town, Kyrgyz).

Chigu was a small city situated on a piece of flat land among huge mountains. There, a tall, circular wall made of mud and stone enclosed many tents, which were lined up with roads intersecting between them. Due to the small size of the city, only Zhang Qian and the deputy envoys entered the town to call upon the king, with gifts in hand. The other men pitched their tents outside the city, letting their thousands and thousands of cattle and sheep graze on the hillsides.

Zhang Qian, leading his deputy envoys and holding a *jie* in his hand, entered the tent of the Wusun Kunmo. Inside, all he saw was an old man with a grey beard and a wrinkled face sitting there, with an official on either side. Zhang Qian thought to himself, "He's still living! Isn't this the mythological character who drank wolf's milk, defeated the Xiongnu, and established Wusun?"

Zhang Qian approached Kunmo and said, "Our Han Empire is stronger than ever before. Not long ago, our army went deep into the desert and beat the Xiongnu army until they were left in utter shambles. The Xiongnu chanyu took what was left of his army and retreated to an unknown place. The Qilian Mountains, where you used to live, were also recaptured by the Han army. There is a large piece of land there with abundant water and grass. If you are able to move back, and unite with the Han Dynasty, then you will be able to completely defeat the Xiongnu, and take revenge at long last."

After listening to Zhang Qian, Kunmo was silent for a moment. Then he said, "There are fine pastures near Qilian Mountain, so naturally, moving back there would be a good thing. However, we are accustomed to living here, and the life here is good too. I'm afraid that my subjects would not wish to move now."

To persuade Kunmo to move back to Qilian Mountain, Zhang Qian continued, "If the Kunmo moves back to Qilian Mountain, and establishes a state of brotherhood the Han, then not only will the emperor give the most precious gifts to you, but he has also agreed to give you a Han princess to be your wife. Having become relatives, the Han Dynasty would give you many gifts every year."

Kunmo laughed, and said, "Brotherhood and family ties, those are all good things, of course. But this is something huge. I must speak it over with my children and advisors. You have come a great distance, and must be exhausted. Why don't you rest for a few days and then we will discuss it again."

Seeing Kunmo's attitude, Zhang Qian supposed that there must be another reason for his hesitancy. After returning to the inn, he

immediately sought out a government official to speak about it. It didn't take much to get his answer; as soon as he inquired, it became clear to him. It turned out that Kunmo had more than ten sons. According to the custom, the eldest son was the crown prince, and the rightful successor to the throne. However, the prince died when he was just middle-aged. On his deathbed, he asked Kunmo to give the throne to his son Cen Zou. In his grief, Kunmo agreed to do so. When another of Kunmo's son, Da Lu learned of this, he was enraged. In an act of rebellion, he prepared to deploy troops from the 10,000-strong cavalry that he commanded to attack Cen Zou. There was nothing Kunmo could do but authorize Cen Zou the use of 10,000 horsemen of his own, and have him live on his own. Kunmo used his over 10,000 of his own men to separate Da Lu and Cen Zou. Wusun was only nominally ruled by Kunmo alone; in fact, it was ruled by three separate leaders. How was it possible, therefore, that Kunmo could go back down to Qilian Mountain to reestablish a homeland?

After resting for a few days, Zhang Qian told his deputy envoys, "It seems as though Kunmo will not be able to come to a decision very quickly. Quickly, go visit states!" At that, the deputy envoys prepared many gifts and went separately to states such as Dayuan, Kangju, Parthia, Bactria, and Yuezhi. When sending them off, Zhang Qian repeatedly reminded them to be prudent and protect the dignity of the Han mission. When interacting with people in the foreign lands, they were to act in good faith and courtesy, and to diligently learn the local customs in each place. Further, if they came upon good plant seeds, then they were to take some back to the Han Empire to grow the plants there.

Wusun Kunmo discussed matters with his cabinet ministers for many days, but was still unable to come up with a consensus. Kunmo felt torn. He wanted the Han gifts, but was afraid of going against the Xiongnu. When Zhang Qian understood the situation, he felt that it was useless to continue waiting. He bid Kunmo farewell and prepared to return home. Kunmo did not try to make him stay. He gave the Han

Dynasty dozens of Wusun horses as a gift, and even sent a group of people to go to Chang'an with Zhang Qian to study the advanced Han culture and technology. Zhang Qian expressed a sincere welcome to the Wusun people, and traveled back to Chang'an with them. When they entered Chang'an, the blue-eyed, red-haired Wusun people immediately caused a stir in Chang'an. People crowded on both sides of the streets, watching them and quietly debating:

"Where are these people from? They look so strange!"

"They may be Wusun people. Isn't that Bo Wanghou in the back? He went on the mission to Wusun, and brought back a lot of gifts!"

"Wusun is a great state in the West. I heard that their king grew up drinking wolf's milk and had defeated the Xiongnu before. If Wusun people are coming in Chang'an, they must be here to make friends with us. The Wusun and the Han have formed and alliance. Now we really don't fear the Xiongnu!"

Emperor Wu left the palace to meet Zhang Qian and the Wusun visitors at Shanglin (west of the current-day city of Xi'an in Shaanxi Province). The Wusun visitors presented the gifts to Emperor Wu. As soon as he saw the several massive Wusun horses, Emperor Wu could not help but repeatedly express his pleasure. He changed his clothes, selected a horse, and tried riding one around on the grounds outside the palace. After galloping around for quite a while, Emperor Wu dismounted and said to Zhang Qian and the visitors, "This horse is great! It runs rapidly yet steadily. Neither the Xiongnu horses nor the Donghu horses can compare. Zhang Qian, didn't you once say that there was some sort of heavenly horse in the mountaintops of Dayuan? I think these Wusun horses must be those heavenly horses." From then on, Wusun horses were also called "heavenly horses."

The Wusun

Wusun is the name of an ancient people from northwestern China. They were an ancient nomadic steppe tribe of the Indo-European

people. They suddenly appeared in the northwestern area of China during the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, and later established an important state in the Ili River Valley-the State of Wusun. The Wusun first wandered around the areas between Dunhuang and the Qilian Mountains, neighboring the Xiongnu and Yuezhi. During the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, the Xiongnu rose up and attacked the Yuezhi. The Yuezhi fled to the west, overrunning the Wusun in the process. Many Wusun people ran to the Xiongnu. With the help of the Xiongnu, the Wusun captured Yuezhi territory in 177 to 176 BC, and established their capital Chigu (on the eastern banks of Issyk Kul Lake) in 161 BC. During the Western Han, there were 120,000 households in Wusun and 630,000 people. They raised livestock and bred good horses known as "western end horses." At that time, they were already using ironware, and were also somewhat skilled in producing metals, ceramics, hides, and wool. In 119 BC, Emperor Wu of Han sent Zhang Qian on a diplomatic mission to Wusun to try to control the Xiongnu. Later, two girls from royal Han families, Princess Xijun and Princess Jieyou, were given to Wusun men in marriage. The countries remained in close contact, promoting the economic and cultural exchanges between the Central Plains and the Western Region, and curbing the influence of the Xiongnu. Beginning in the year 52 BC, however, a two-kingdom system, controlled by one greater kunmo and one lesser kunmo, appeared in Wusun and caused frequent internal turmoil. After being invaded by the Rouran, the Wusun moved west to north of the Pamir Plateau during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. After that, they gradually blended together with other peoples in the area.

Although Zhang Qian was not able to accomplish his task of bringing the Wusun people into an alliance with the Han, he did bring in guests from the Western Region to Chang'an. This was the

beginning of a new day, and he greatly contributed to it. Because Zhang Qian had demonstrated outstanding diplomatic abilities during his diplomatic mission to the Western Region, Emperor Wu of Han promoted him to a high-ranking position as special overseers of foreign affairs.

The days in Chang'an went by very pleasantly for the Wusun visitors. The Han were hospitable and courteous, and they were deeply impressed by the flourishing markets and the majestic palace there. Before their departure, Emperor Wu of Han hosted a farewell dinner on their behalf, and presented them with much silk. The special Wusun envoy was very appreciative, and thanked the Emperor over and over. "The Han Dynasty is so rich and powerful, and yet you have been so respectful and friendly toward us. We will certainly report on this to our king when we return, so that we can remain on friendly terms forever." Over the next year, states such as Dayuan, Kangju, Bactria, and Yuezhi all sent people with the Han deputy envoys to Chang'an. From then on, the Han Empire began to have official interaction with every state in the Western Region. The Han Empire sent more envoys to places such as Parthia, Kucha, Rome, Singh (India), Yancai (northeast of the Caspian Sea), and Mesopotamia. Each state trusted the envoys sent to the Western Region, and they had good relations with each other. The Wusun people even intermarried with the Han people. The envoys were sent to the West frequently and in great numbers, so they would often meet each other along the way. Like Zhang Qian did, they would all carry their diplomatic credentials as well as valuable silk products. The road was long, and it would be eight or nine years before they would return.

The Development of the Hexi Corridor

Through Zhang Qian's missions to the Western Region, China's

interior formally established relations with Xinjiang, and even with the Central Asian region. During his first mission to the Western Region, Zhang Qian came into extensive contact with each state in the area as a representative of the Western Han Dynasty. During his second mission to the Western Region, he established good relations with Wusun, further strengthening the Han Dynasty's relations with the tribal states. After they were sent to the Western Han with Zhang Qian, the Wusun representatives returned to Wusun having obtained a better understanding of the great Han Dynasty from the time they spent there. From that time on, the Wusun State and the Han Dynasty engaged in frequent continued interaction. Emperor Wu of Han even gave Princess Xijun, the daughter of the king of Jiangdu, to the Wusun in marriage.

Hexi became an important location along the road that led to the Western Region. It was located in western Gansu, between the Qinghai-Tibetan and Inner Mongolian plateaus, which had been a thoroughfare for transportation between China and the West since ancient times. This long, narrow passageway was over a thousand *li* in length east to west, but less than a hundred *li* in width north to south. It was an important position for military affairs. Both the Yuezhi and the Wusun roamed this land at the end of the third century BC, but the Yuezhi later drove the Wusun away, and took occupation of Hexi. The Yuezhi were then forced out by the Xiongnu, who grew in power in the early years of the Western Han. The Xiongnu now had power over Hexi, and they divided it among seven or eight kings, including Hun Xie, Xiu Tu, and Lu Hu. In this way, Hexi became an important production base for the Xiongnu, and also a stronghold for linking them with the Western Region and controlling the Qiang people of Qinghai. Strategically, that meant that the Western Han was in a position of being surrounded on both the western and northern sides, a serious threat to the capital city of Chang'an. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han, the Western Han Dynasty economy recovered, and the empire grew in power. In the hopes of ensuring security for

his empire's borders, Emperor Wu planned a military attack against the Xiongnu. In 127 BC, over ten thousand Xiongnu soldiers on horseback ravaged Shanggu (southeast of modern-day Huailai in Hebei). Emperor Wu sent Huo Qubing out to Longxi, crossing the Yanzhi Mountains (now called Mount Dan Yanzhi in the Gansu Mountains), and going more than a thousand *li* into Xiongnu territory. They destroyed Xiongnu and captured their leaders, including Prince Hun Xie, the prime minister, and the army commander. In the summer of that same year, Huo Qubing led a second campaign westward, crossing the Juyan Marsh (current-day Juyan Sea in Inner Mongolia), and seizing the Qilian Mountains. He captured over 30,000 Xiongnu troops, and the Xiongnu kings of Hexi suffered disastrous losses. In the autumn of that year, the Xiongnu kings began fighting amongst themselves. King Hun Xie killed King Xiu Tu, and 40,000 troops surrendered to the Han. The Han government arranged for them to live in the Hetao area, setting up five states there under Han control. From that time on, Hexi and the region from the Qilian Mountains to Lake Lop Nur were no longer threatened by the Xiongnu. Emperor Wu of Han strengthened his rule of Hexi by moving people there to grow crops, and by setting up a beacon fire, positioning commanders, and stationing border forces, gradually establishing prefectures and counties there as well.

In 121 BC, the Han Dynasty officially established the two prefectures of Jiuquan and Wuwei. In 111 BC, Dunhuang broke off from Jiuquan and Zhangye broke off from Wuwei to become their own prefectures.

Setting up those four Hexi prefectures, along with the Han's development of the Hexi region, turned into important actions for the trade corridor. In the days of the Qin and Han dynasties, Hexi was occupied by the Yuezhi and the Wusun, both of which were nomadic tribes similar to the Xiongnu. The economy and civilization there were backward. The region was sparsely populated and its natural resources were under-utilized. After the Xiongnu took control of Hexi, it

immediately became their base, and they continued developing the livestock industry there. Therefore, prior to Emperor Wu of Han, the society and economy of Hexi had always primarily revolved around animal husbandry. After the Han Dynasty took control of Hexi, in order to develop the area, they opened up transportation lines to the Western Region and moved people there to grow crops to develop agricultural industry and improve the economy in this borderland that was lagging behind. To develop the agricultural industry in Hexi, the Western Han government provided plenty of human labor force. The flourishing livestock industry in the Hexi region also provided an abundance of animal power resources for the agricultural industry. Additionally, the citizens and prisoners who moved from the inlands to Hexi at that time were almost all farmers. When they moved from the Central Plains, they took with them the advanced production technology and know-how, and introduced iron tools to the region too. Together, such manpower, animal power, and material resources not only formed the productive force that raised the level of agriculture, but also created the conditions for the development of the Hexi region's agricultural production.

The Han Dynasty turned Hexi from nomadic pastures into an agricultural area, which had enormous economic value. One advantage was that the Hexi agricultural district not only connected the Central Plains with the old agricultural area south of the Tianshan Mountains, but also connected the agricultural areas of Central Asia. This created the conditions for unhindered trade along the Silk Road. Another advantage was that a stable agricultural area had facilities such as posthouses, inns, and towns that made trade travel safer and more convenient. Goods that are needed to replenish supplies along a route could now be exchanged as well. The establishment of the four Hexi prefectures and the Han's development of Hexi, therefore, provided a guarantee for the formation of the trade corridor in terms of manpower and material resources.

The seat of local government for Wuwei Prefecture was northeast of Minqin County in Gansu Province. The land there was fertile, well suited for agriculture and raising livestock. Wuwei was sparsely populated, with land suitable for raising livestock, and indeed, the livestock from that area was well known. The seat of government for Wuwei during the Western Han inherited the former residence of the Xiongnu on one hand, and had to consider its function as a border defense on the other hand, so it was positioned to the north. From that time until the Tang Dynasty, that location remained the political, economic, and cultural center of the Hexi region.

Zhangye was located in the center of the Hexi Corridor. Its name meant "cutting off the arm of the Xiongnu and opening wide the armpit of China." It was a major stop along the Silk Road, and led to Juyan Marsh to the north. The main road leading to the grasslands north of the Gobi desert also passed through there, and to the south, it led to the Western Qiang Qinghai-Tibetan highlands. The old site of the Han Dynasty Zhangye Prefecture may be the ancient city of Heishui Guo northwest of modern-day Zhangye. Zhangye was rich in water resources, which was beneficial for the development of agriculture there, and it was known for its rich and fertile earth.

Jiuquan was a military base during the Han Dynasty. There were natural springs in the eastern part of the city. It is said that, back then, Emperor Wu of Han presented some liquor to honor Huo Qubing. There was not enough for everyone, so Huo Qubing poured the liquor into the spring and the soldiers drank from it together. That is how Jiuquan, which literally means "alcohol spring," got its name. The seat of government for Jiuquan during the Han Dynasty was at Fulu City, in the southern part of Hanchang. There are no remaining relics from there. The current

Jiuquan City was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It was erected on the base of the former site of the Western Jin (265-317) Fulu City. During the Western Han, large quantities of cavalrymen often resided in Jiuquan. The great Han Dynasty generals Li Guangli and Zhao Chongguo dispatched troops from Jiuquan to attack Xiongnu.

Dunhuang was the most remote of the four prefectures, and it was also where the Northern and Southern Routes of the Silk Road met. Heading west from Dunhuang, going out from Yumen Pass was the Northern Route, and going out from the Yangguan Pass was the Southern Route. When guests arriving from the Western Region initially stepped foot onto the Han Empire, the first city they came to was Dunhuang. Dunhuang of the Han Dynasty was located on the western banks of the Dang River southwest of modern-day Dunhuang in Gansu Province. The city had a rectangular shape, 718 meters from east to west, 1,132 meters from north to south, and projecting 16 meters in height. Dunhuang was in a very significant location throughout the history of the Silk Road. The exquisite murals in the Mogao Grottoes and the recent discovery of countless texts have made Dunhuang a world-renowned treasure trove for art and culture.

The economic development of the Hexi region and the trade corridor gradually took form, and brought relations between the Han Empire and the Western Region much closer and promoted economic and cultural exchange between China and the West. At that time, all the Western Region countries were continuously sending envoys to the Han Dynasty to pay tribute. Such envoys would find shelter in Hexi with fellow countrymen. For various reasons, some of them were unable to return home, and stayed in Hexi, joining the Han service or making a living on their own. Because they understood different languages, they formed a tie between the Han and the Western Region, acting as an intermediary in the economic and cultural

exchange between China and the West. The products and techniques of the Central Plains, such as silk goods, iron making, metal casting, and well digging continuously spread into the Western Region, having a definite impact on the society and economy of there. Likewise, products from the Western Region such as fine horses, cotton, walnuts, alfalfa and grapes spread into the Central Plains, enriching the lives of the people there. Therefore, the establishment of the four prefectures in Hexi and the opening up of the trade corridor not only solidified the Western Han's rule over the border area, but also set forth the conditions for the Silk Road to take form.

The Prosperity of the Silk Road

Zhang Qian's missions to the Western Region altogether lasted over thirty years. He was a humble and sincere person and respectful of others. No matter where he went, he never neglected Chinese etiquette, and he gained the trust of many countries and peoples. So many years of arduous journeys and difficult living took its toll on his health. Zhang Qian returned to Chang'an from his final mission, and fell ill and passed away just over a year later. However, the Silk Road that he pioneered ushered in a new era in economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West. His missions to the Western Region went down in history books as "tunnel-digging" operations, meaning he was the first to open the gate to the Western Region. This brave and dedicated explorer and diplomat made a permanent mark on history.

Those who traveled along the Silk Road, apart from those on diplomatic missions, were mainly merchants involved in trade. To make their passage easier, some merchants posed as diplomats. Chinese silk was frequently transported along these routes, passing along many hands. In the most extreme cases, the silk would arrive at its destination in locations as far away as the Mediterranean Sea

region. Though the Han Dynasty did not have direct interaction with the Roman Empire, through many of years of development, a type of trade system had already taken shape, centered on Chinese silk export. Apart from China, it involved Rome, Central Asia, Southwest Asia, India, Indonesia, and Africa, with Rome being the western end of this trade route. Exchanges among these trading partners facilitated contacts between the peoples and goods of the Eurasian Continent region and the transporting of Chinese silk to the West. Central Asian people served as the transporters and guides, and Southwestern Asian and African people were responsible for the storage and management of the goods. From Central Asia, China acquired horses, jade, and wool; Rome acquired Chinese silk, which was used as adornment in the luxurious lives of the Roman senators and aristocrats. At the same time, Indonesian spices and Indian peppers entered the scene, which was purchased with ironware, glass, gold, and silver.

In the days of old when maritime navigation was not yet developed, long-distance trade was primarily developed and expanded upon land. Trading could take months at least and years at most. The Silk Road was an extremely long trade route. Merchants relied mostly on camels, horses, donkeys, and mules to transport their cargo upon the Silk Road, with camels being the most prevalent. A large trade caravan would often be made up of anywhere from ten to a hundred camels. In the height of the Han and Tang dynasties, there was an endless stream of merchants traveling along the Silk Road, with large-scale camel and horse caravans connecting together, one after another, into a long, unbroken stretch. They would pass through the great Gobi Desert, a vast and mighty group, and to the sound of clanging camel bells, appear and disappear between the oases.

The two-humped camel, which was bred in the Western Region and the Mongolian highlands, had an extreme capacity for carrying weight on its back. Transporting goods along the long route across the Pamirs Plateau and Iranian highlands was left entirely up to camels. There was an excitement for long-distance trade like nothing else

before, and those old civilizations and city-states in strategic places along the Silk Road flourished. In those one thousand long years, traveling merchants, wearing all sorts of different clothing and each having different color of skin, came and went without stop, making a special historical scene on the desert silk road.

Silk was the main item that the trade caravans would cross the Silk Road to sell to distant places in the West. It was also the most desired merchandise among Central Asian, Southwest Asians, Southern Asian, and European people. Some Western Region states developed into important stops along the way as the silk trade increased by the day, participating in the transporting of silk. One example is Shule (today's Kashgar in Xinjiang), which was where the Southern and Northern Routes of the Silk Road converged. It became an important center for collection and distribution before the trade caravans cross the Pamirs to the west. Another example is the State of Kanju, which was skilled at trade. Their merchants would follow alongside camels in throngs, carrying goods such as furs and spices to exchange for silk in Chang'an, and then transport the silk to places such as Iran and Central Asia. Historically, Parthia, which was located on an important Silk Road line in Central Asia, had extremely developed commerce. It was a great nation that had considerably close trade relations with the Han Dynasty. For quite some time, Parthia had control over China's silk trade with the West. Located on the eastern bank region of the Mediterranean Sea, the Roman Empire was the largest consumer of Chinese silk. They went to battle with Parthia many times to try to break up Parthia's monopoly on silk trade. The Roman Empire also attempted to find and open up a new channel through with to directly connect with China.

Chinese trade caravans that left Chang'an for the Western Region were the main force for transporting silk. Diplomatic envoys sent out by the Han Dynasty were often actually government-operated trade groups. Huge camels would carry large quantities of silk, gold, cattle and sheep. There were multiple diplomatic envoys sent out in groups

every year that would cross long distances following the Silk Road to make contact, exchange goods, and form relationships with the faraway Saka people, the Da Yuezhi, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Indians. During the Han Dynasty, Chinese trade caravans had already reached many countries in Central Asia, Southwest Asia, and Southern Asia. They left footprints on the Amu Darya River Valley, the northern part of the Caspian Sea, the highlands of Iran, northern India, Mesopotamia, Syria, and the banks of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Han diplomat sent to Parthia gained much from his mission. The Parthian king had heard that Emperor Wu of Han was interested in Mesopotamian bird's eggs and Roman magicians, so he gave ostrich eggs and Roman magicians from his court to the Emperor. The magicians traveled with the diplomat back to Chang'an, and performed tricks like swallowing knives, spitting fire, and other circus feats. Emperor Wu of Han was very pleased, rewarded the diplomat to Parthia handsomely, and kept the Roman magicians in the palace. Due to Emperor Wu's fondness for magic, it quickly became popular in China, and those magicians were never able to return to their home country. They were the first Romans to come to China in recorded history.

Along with the frequent interaction between the East and West, economic and cultural exchange greatly promoted social and cultural development. According to records, twenty types of Chinese plants and minerals were introduced to the Western Region, and over forty types of plants from Western Region states were introduced to China via the Silk Road.

3

条条大路通长安

西南通道的探索

张骞虽然封了官，但由于他第一次出使时，没能完成劝说月氏和汉朝结盟的任务，心中总有些不安。现在汉朝、匈奴正在激烈争斗，如果能在西方开辟第二条战线，来牵制匈奴一下，该有多好。可是，去西域的道路还得经过匈奴控制的地区，太不安全。能不能开辟一条新道，绕过匈奴控制的地区呢？他苦苦思索着，连饭也吃不下，觉也睡不好了。一天，他忽然想起在大夏时和身毒商人的谈话，想起从身毒贩卖到那里去的蜀布和邛竹，心中一阵高兴。他连忙进宫求见汉武帝，说出了开辟去西域新道的计划，谈起了他在大夏看到的汉朝特产。

蜀身毒地图，藏于云南大理博物馆。

A sketch map of Shu-Hindu Road, collected by Dali Museum of Yunnan.

武帝听完张骞的话，十分惊奇地问道：“大夏会有蜀布和邛竹？你该

不会弄错吧？”

张骞说他绝对不会弄错，还说，这蜀布是质地坚实而又光滑的柔软的麻布，他小时候常穿。那邛竹生长在四川的邛崃山中，节子很长，并且是实心的，而其他竹子都是空心的。

武帝就更加惊奇了，四川的东西怎么到了大夏呢？

张骞说：“我和身毒的商人交谈过，他们说，身毒在四川的西南方，在大夏的东南方，靠近大海，地势低洼，天气暑热，士兵们骑着大象打仗。大夏在汉朝西边一万二千里，离身毒有几千里路。身毒能买到四川的东西，离四川一定不会很远。我们走西北这条道去西域，要经过匈奴，太不安全；要是从四川出发，走西南的新道，经过身毒去大夏，就可以绕过匈奴了。”

南丝绸之路上的古驿站登相营，四川喜德县。
Dengxiangying, an ancient post on the South Route of the Silk Road in Xide County, Sichuan.

武帝听了十分高兴，立刻叫张骞负责组织这条新道的探险。

张骞很快组织起了从四川探路去身毒的使团。公元前122年5月，他派出王然于率领着随员们来到了四川的犍为郡。从这里，王然于派出了四个组，从不同的方向探索去身毒的路。这条路也是够艰险的，高山连绵不断，有的覆盖着原始森林，有的终年积雪；大河水深流急，无船可渡；野兽时常出现，云雾挡住了视线。其中三路人马分别深入1000多里，但由于受到土著部落的阻拦，或是被高山大河、原始森林挡住去路，都被迫中途折回。第四路人马一直向南走去，越过了无数的崇山峻岭，来到了一个地势平坦、人烟稠密的地区，看见一个水波粼粼的大湖（今云南滇池）。这里四季如春，气候温暖，土地肥沃，物产丰富。这是一个富饶的大国，叫做滇国。汉使们一打听，滇国国王名叫当羌，是楚国将军庄蹻的后代。早在战国时期，庄蹻就奉楚威王的命令，带兵经过夜郎国（在今贵州西部）来到这里。后来，秦兵隔断了庄蹻和楚国的联系，庄蹻回不了楚国，就改变了自己的服装和风俗，和当地少数民族融合，建立了滇国。汉使探明了这些情况，连忙去找国王当羌，请求支援。

仍然会讲汉活的当羌见到了故乡的客人，心里非常激动。他滔滔不绝地向汉使介绍滇国的情况，又关心地询问着汉朝的种种情形。当羌为汉使举行了隆重的招待会，热情款待来自故乡的亲人。汉使谈起了他们的使命，请求当羌的帮助。当羌爽快答应下来，并说：“你们要去的身毒国，可能是滇国西南边大约2000多里外的一个国家，地势低洼，气候炎热，打仗时骑着大象。你们放心好了，我一定派人给你们带路。”

在滇国向导的陪同下，汉使从滇国出发，往西去寻找身毒。不久，他们进入了少数民族居住的高山地区。这些少数民族当时还处于部落时代，怀疑语言不通、服装不同的外来人会伤害他们，就不准汉朝人通过。汉使无法解释，只得绕道西行，但到其他地区，又被截住了。有的少数民族甚至打算杀死他们，他们只得退了回来。态度热情的当羌却不灰心，又派人从不同方向探路去身毒。一年之间，这样的探路活动进行了多次，结果都在中途折回。王然于只得率领使臣回长安，向张骞和汉武帝汇报。

这样，从四川经过身毒去大夏的新道，终于没有能够打通，张骞遭遇了一个重大挫折。一年后，张骞又遇到了另一个重大挫折。

李广像
A portrait of Li Guang.

那是公元前121年的事。朝廷命令张骞率1万名骑兵和著名的飞将军李广组成东路军攻打匈奴，规定他们按不同的路线前进，约好时间到指定的地点会师。一心想胜利的张骞私自改变了行军路线，绕了一个大圈，结果到达预定地点时晚了两天。李广将军因此被匈奴大军包围，部队损失惨重。张骞虽然把李广救了出来，却无力和匈奴的军队战斗了。按照当时的军法，张骞要被杀头。后来他拿出一批钱财赎罪，才幸免于死，但官职和爵位却全没了，成了一个平民百姓。

第二次出使西域

在张骞第一次出使西域之后，汉朝大将卫青和霍去病在公元前121年和公元前119年先后两次取得对匈奴战役的胜利，将匈奴赶出了中国边境。匈奴骑兵被大大削弱，再也无力大规模侵犯汉朝了。到这个时候，汉朝对匈奴的自卫反击战，才算取得了决定性的胜利。匈奴的势力也退出了河西走廊和祁连山地区，去西域的道路畅通无阻了。在这种形势下，武帝又想起了西域和张骞。

武帝回想着张骞的话：西域有很多文明古国，应该把他们争取过来，共同对付匈奴；西域有很多珍奇物产，应该引进汉朝来，丰富百姓的生活；西域很需要汉朝的铁器和丝绸，可以和他们做生意。

卫青像
A portrait of Wei Qing.

他决心和张骞单独谈谈，看能否再次出使西域。于是他派人把成了平民的张骞请进宫来。一见到汉武帝，张骞就十分兴奋，猜想武帝要谈关于西域的事务。武帝笑着点头，果然他想派张骞再次出使西域。他问张骞去哪国比较好。张骞答道："天山北面有个大国，名叫乌孙，有60多万人口，和匈奴是仇敌。这次我就到乌孙去吧！"武帝又问，乌孙原来和匈奴的关系很好，怎么又变成匈奴的仇敌了呢？张骞解释道，乌孙本来也和月氏都住在祁连山下，后来为争夺草场，被月氏人打败了，国王也给杀死了。乌孙人流亡到匈奴境内，国王的小儿子猎骄靡也由匈奴单于收养。王子长大以后，练成了一身好功夫，跟着老上单于东征西战，立下了不少战功。老上单于就把一个匈奴贵族的姑娘给他做了妻子，把寄居在匈奴的乌孙人都交给他统领。后来老上单于死了，猎骄靡的力量更强大了。他不甘心受匈奴人的统治，就向继任的军臣单于请求，允许他带兵攻打逃进天山的月氏人，为他的父母报仇。猎骄靡打败了月氏人，把他们赶出天山，就在那里定居下来。不久，猎骄靡建立了乌孙国，自己当了昆莫（即国王），也不再向匈奴朝贡。军臣单于很恼火，就派骑兵进攻乌孙昆莫。昆莫也不示弱，居然打败了匈奴兵。就这样，乌孙和匈奴就由朋友变成了仇敌。

张骞建议去劝说乌孙昆莫，让他跟汉朝结盟，迁回老家祁连山，共同对付匈奴，这就等于砍断了匈奴的右胳膊。乌孙归顺了，凭着汉朝刚打败匈奴的声威，可以将乌孙的邻居大宛，以及康居、月氏等都招过来作为汉朝的属国。

霍去病像

A portrait of Huo Qubing.

为了表示对这次出使的重视和对张骞的信任，汉武帝授予张骞中郎将（皇帝侍卫统领）的官职。公元前115年，第二次出使西域的使团出发。这是一支空前庞大的队伍，一共有300人，除正使张骞外，还有十多个副使。他们带着600匹马，除300匹供乘骑外，另外300匹驮着粮食、衣物和帐篷，驮着价值昂贵的礼物，包括闪闪发亮的铁器、黄金、耀眼的丝绸。队伍后面，还有上万头牛羊，跟着浩浩荡荡地前进。

这次出使和上次出使的情形大不一样了。由于汉朝夺回了河套和祁连山，匈奴右部的浑邪王、休屠王又投降了汉朝，他们的地盘也划入了汉朝。公元前121年，也就是浑邪王降汉的那一年，汉武帝就在新收复的地域内，设置了武威郡和酒泉郡，并在敦煌的西边设置了玉门关和阳关两座关口。玉门关专管出入西域北道的事务，阳关专管出入西域南道的事务。汉武帝不仅从潼关以东迁移了70多万遭受水灾的居民去充实武威、酒泉二郡，还把长城从朔方郡修到了敦煌郡的玉门关，使得长城的西头从临洮移到了玉门，一下子西移了1000多公里。陇西郡不像20年前那样，是汉朝西部的边关，而成了支援武威、敦煌的大后方。

伊塞克湖风光
Scenery of Issyk.

于是张骞的这次出使，不再像前次那样小心翼翼、昼伏夜行了。他们尽量壮大着自己的声势，从金城（今兰州）渡过滔滔黄河，在武威越过巍巍祁连山，出了玉门关，绕过浩淼的罗布泊，穿过黄尘滚滚的沙漠，经过西域的都市国家，翻过终年积雪的葱岭北段，把汉朝的强大、富饶和友好，深深地刻印在沿途各族人民的记忆之中。西域的都市国家君民，产生了强烈的摆脱匈奴归依汉朝的倾向，都纷纷派出王子等贵族子弟，到汉朝首都长安观光学习，向汉朝表达了归附的愿望。

经过许多天的风餐露宿，张骞他们终于来到了山地牧场广阔的乌孙国。乌孙国位于天山西北的阗池（今伊塞克湖，在哈萨克斯坦）一带。这里的气候虽然比较寒冷，雨水却比天山南边更多。起伏的山坡上，松林葱翠，牧草丰茂，是个优良的牧场。

乌孙国除了蓝眼睛、红胡子的征服者乌孙人外，还有被征服的黄皮肤的月氏人和白皮肤的塞种人，这两个民族的人比乌孙人还多。他们讲着不同的语言，住在相同式样的帐篷里，过着同样的游牧生活。乌孙人强悍善战，乌孙的战马也闻名于世，素有“良马国”的美称。在那广阔的牧场上，成千上万的良马扬蹄急驰，迎风长嘶。

汉朝的庞大使团来访的消息，惊动了整个乌孙。沿途的乌孙居民，

老老少少都聚集在大路两旁，一边观看一边议论，用不同的语言，七嘴八舌地表达他们惊讶和欢迎的感情。乌孙国王的特使专程到城外迎接。在国王特使的陪同下，张骞一行到了乌孙的都城赤谷城（在今吉尔吉斯伊什提克城附近）。

赤谷是一座小城，坐落在陡峭的山中一块小平地上，一圈土石筑成的高墙包围着许多帐篷，排排帐篷间的空地组成了十字交叉的街道。由于城小，张骞和十几个副使带着礼物进城去拜见国王，其余的随员只好在城外搭起帐篷扎营，把带来的上万头牛羊放牧在山坡上。

张骞带着副使，手拿旌节，走进了乌孙昆莫的大帐篷里，只见一个胡须花白、满脸皱纹的老头坐在里面，两旁站着大臣。张骞心想：他还活着呀！这不就是那个吃过狼奶、打败过匈奴、重建了乌孙的神话般的人物吗？

张骞上前对昆莫说：“我们汉朝比以前更强大了。不久前，我们的军队深入沙漠，打得匈奴军队落花流水，匈奴单于带着残兵败将，逃得不知去向。你们原来居住的祁连山区，也被汉军收复了。那里有大片的土地、丰美的水草，你们如能搬回去，和汉朝联合起来，就一定能彻底打败匈奴，报你们的旧仇。”

昆莫听完了张骞的话，沉默了一会儿，然后说：“祁连山有优良的牧场，搬回那里，当然不错。不过我们在这里住惯了，生活也很不错，臣民们恐怕不愿意搬动了。”

为了争取昆莫迁回祁连山，张骞又继续劝说：“只要昆莫搬回祁连山，和汉朝结为兄弟之邦，我们的皇上不但以最珍贵的礼物送给昆莫，还答应嫁一个公主给昆莫做夫人。结为亲戚以后，汉朝每年都会送许多礼物给您。”

昆莫笑了笑，说：“结为兄弟，成为亲戚，那当然好。只是这事情太大，我得和孩子、大臣们商议一下才行。你们远道而来，一定很劳累了，先休息几天我们再谈吧。”

张骞见昆莫态度犹豫，猜想可能另有原因。回到旅店以后，他连忙找乌孙官员交谈，没有费多大工夫，就把事情打听得一清二楚。原来昆莫有十多个儿子，按照惯例立长子为太子，作为王位的合法继承人。这太子到中年就夭折了，临死前请求昆莫将王位传给他的儿子岑陬，昆莫非常伤心，就答应了太子。另一个儿子大禄知道了非常愤怒，很不服气，他手下有1万骑兵，就调兵遣将准备进攻岑陬。昆莫拿他没办法，

只好拨给岑陬1万骑兵，让他单独居住。昆莫自己领着骑兵1万余人，把大禄和岑陬隔开。乌孙名义上是昆莫统治，实际上已经三足鼎立。这样一来，昆莫哪能返回祁连山下去重建家园呢？

新疆塔什库尔干，丝绸之路上的石头城遗址。
Ruins of the Ancient City on the Silk Road.

休息了几天以后，张骞对副使们说；“看样子，昆莫不会很快作出决定的，你们赶快出使别的国家吧！”于是副使们准备好了礼物，分头去大宛、康居、安息、大夏、月氏等国。送行时，张骞一再叮嘱他们小心谨慎，维护汉使的尊严；和外国打交道时要讲信义、懂礼貌；要用心研究各国的风土人情；有好的植物种子，带一些回汉朝种植。

乌孙昆莫和他的大臣们讨论了好久，也拿不出一个统一的意见来。昆莫心里十分矛盾，他既想得到汉朝的财物，又害怕触犯了匈奴。张骞知道了这种情况，觉得再等下去也是白搭，就向昆莫告辞，准备回国。昆莫也不挽留，他送了汉朝几十匹乌孙良马，还叫几十个人跟张骞到长安去学习先进的汉朝文化和科学技术。张骞对乌孙人表示了真诚的欢迎，同他们一起返回长安。

蓝眼睛红头发的乌孙人一进长安，立刻轰动了长安，人们一边挤拥在街道两旁观看，一边轻声地议论：

“这是哪国人呀？他们的容貌多么奇待！”

“可能是乌孙人吧。博望侯不就在后面吗？他这次就是出使乌孙呀，还带回了很多礼物啊！”

“乌孙是西方的一个大国，听说他们的国王是吃狼奶长大的，打败过匈奴。乌孙人到长安来，肯定是和我们交朋友来的。乌孙与汉朝建立联盟，就更不怕匈奴喽。”

武帝在上林（今陕西省西安市以西）离官里接见了张骞和乌孙客人。乌孙客人向武帝献了礼，武帝一见到几十匹身体高大的乌孙马，不由得连声叫好。他换了衣服，挑出一匹，就在宫外的草地上试起马来。急驰了好一阵，武帝下了马，对张骞和客人们说：“这马真不错，跑得既快又稳，连匈奴马、东胡马也比不上。张骞，你不是说过大宛高山顶上有一种天马吗？我想这乌孙马就是天马了。”于是乌孙马被称为“天马”。

张骞虽然没能完成招回乌孙人的任务，却把西域客人引到了长安。这是开天辟地的第一次，功劳非常大。由于张骞在出使西域中表现了卓越的外交才能，汉武帝就提升他担任一个“大行”的官职，专门管理和外国交往的事务。

乌孙客人在长安度过了一段十分愉快的日子，汉朝人的好客和礼貌，长安街市的繁华、宫殿的壮丽，都给他们留下了非常深刻的印象。回国前，汉武帝设宴席为他们饯行，又赠给他们许多丝绸。乌孙使臣十分感激，他们再三感谢说：“汉朝这样强大富饶，对我们又这样尊重和友好，我们回去一定报告国王，永远和汉朝友好相处。”过了一年多，大宛、康居、大夏、月氏等国家都派人和汉朝的副使一起来到长安。从此，汉朝与西域各国开始正式往来，又派使者到安息、龟兹、犛靬（罗马）、身毒（印度）、奄蔡（里海东北）、条支等国。凡出使西域的人，各国都很信任他们，相互之间的关系很好，乌孙甚至还与汉人通婚。由于西行使者往来频繁、人数众多，所以经常在路上相互碰到。他们都像张骞一样带着国书和贵重的丝织品，路途远的要八九年才回来。

乌孙

中国西北古代民族名，是一个以游牧为主的古老的部族，属于印欧人种。公元前2至前1世纪崛起于中国西北地区，后在伊犁河流域建立了一个重要的政权——乌孙国。乌孙最初游牧于敦煌、祁连间，与匈奴、月氏为邻。公元前2至前1世纪时，匈奴兴起，击败月

氏，月氏西逃，仓卒间将乌孙击破，乌孙人多逃奔匈奴。公元前177至前176年乌孙在匈奴帮助下占领月氏故地，公元前161年左右建都赤谷城（伊塞克湖东岸）。西汉时乌孙有12万户，63万人。以畜牧为业，善养良马“西极马”。当时已使用铁器，冶金、制陶、制革、毛织也有一定水平。汉武帝元狩四年（公元前119年）派张骞出使乌孙以制匈奴，后两次以汉宗室女细君、解忧公主嫁乌孙。双方交往密切，促进了中原与西域的经济文化交流，并牵制了匈奴的势力。公元前71年汉与乌孙合击匈奴，使乌孙摆脱匈奴侵扰的威胁。但自公元前52年起，乌孙出现大小昆莫两个王统，分疆而治，内乱迭起。南北朝时乌孙因柔然入侵，西迁葱岭北。以后逐渐与邻近各族融合。

河西走廊的开发

张骞出使西域，正式建立了中国内地和新疆乃至中亚地区的联系。他第一次出使西域时，以西汉王朝使者的身份同当地各族政权进行了广泛的接触。他第二次出使西域，和乌孙建立了良好的关系，进一步加强了汉王朝与各部落政权的联系。随张骞来西汉的乌孙使者，在长安停留期间，对强大的汉王朝有所了解，把这些情况带回了乌孙。从此，乌孙与汉朝来往不绝。后来，汉武帝还把江都王女儿细君公主嫁到了乌孙。

在通往西域的路上，河西的位置至关重要。它位于甘肃西部，处于青藏高原与内蒙古高原之间，自古是中西交通的要道。这条东西长千余里、南北宽不到百里的狭长走廊，在军事上占有重要地位。公元前3世纪末为月氏、乌孙游牧之地，后来月氏赶走乌孙占据了河西。西汉初年，匈奴势力强大起来，月氏又被匈奴迫走。匈奴控制了河西，并由浑邪、休屠、卢胡等七八个王分占河西，这样河西便成了匈奴重要的生产基地和沟通西域、控制青海羌族的据点，在战略上对西汉王朝形成西、北两面包围逼近的态势，对京师长安构成严重威胁。汉武帝时，西汉王朝经济恢复，国力强大，为求边境安宁，谋划对匈奴实行军事打击。公元前127年，匈奴骑兵万余侵犯上谷（今河北怀来东南），武帝命霍去病出陇西，过焉支山（今甘肃山丹胭脂山），进入匈奴境内1000多里，大破匈奴，俘虏了浑邪王子及相国、都尉等人。同年夏，霍去病二次西

征，跨过了居延泽（今内蒙古居延海），攻至祁连山，俘匈奴部众3万余人，河西匈奴贵族损失惨重。这年秋天，匈奴贵族内部分裂，浑邪王杀休屠王，率部4万降汉，汉政府把他们安置在河套地区，建立五个属国。从此，在河西、祁连山到罗布泊地区，不再有匈奴侵扰。于是汉武帝向河西移民屯田，设烽燧，置都尉，驻扎边防军，逐步建立郡县，加强对了河西的统治。

甘肃省河西走廊的古长城
Ancient Great Wall of the Hexi Corridor in Gansu Province.

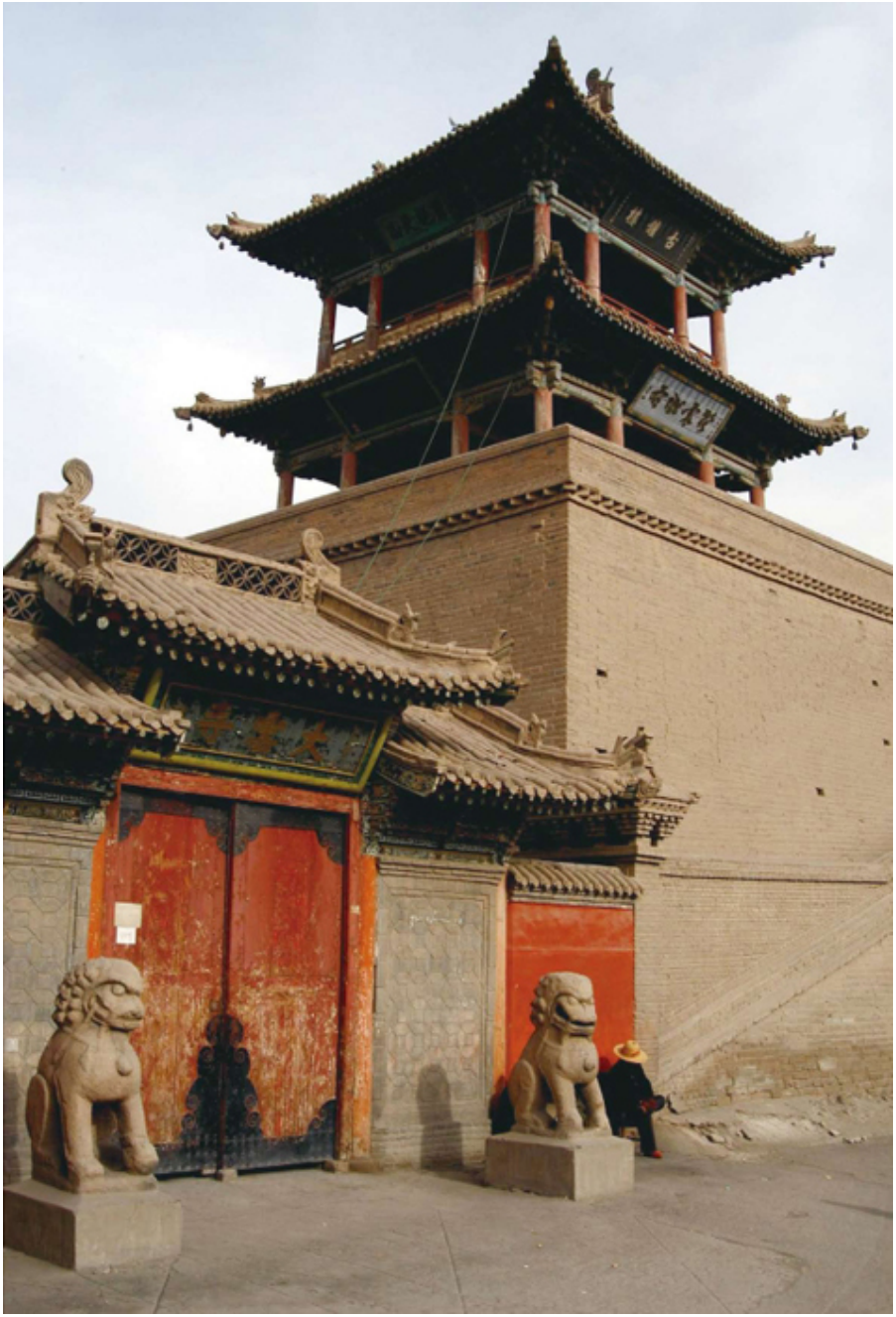
公元前121年，汉朝正式在河西设立酒泉、武威二郡。公元前111年，又从酒泉郡分出敦煌郡，从武威郡分出张掖郡。

河西四郡的设置，以及汉对河西地区的开发，对贸易走廊的形成起了重要作用。秦汉之际，河西为月氏、乌孙占有，这两个部族都是与匈奴习俗相近的游牧部落，经济、文化比较落后。当时河西地广人稀，山林河流没有得到开发。匈奴控制河西后，就以此为基地，继续发展畜牧业经济。因此，在汉武帝以前，河西的社会经济一直处于以畜牧业为主的状态。汉朝控制河西后，为开发当地，打开通往西域的交通，进行移民屯田，发展农业，改变边地落后经济。西汉政府为在河西发展农业生产提供了充足的劳动力。河西地区兴盛的畜牧业又为农业生产提供了丰

富的畜力资源。加上当时由内地迁往河西的移民和犯人大部分都是农民，他们带去了中原先进的生产技术和经验，传入中原的铁制工具，这些人力、畜力和物力因素，不仅构成了提高农业水平的生产力，而且为河西地区农业生产的发展创造了条件。

甘肃敦煌鸣沙山月牙泉

The Crescent Spring of the Singing Sand Mountain in Dunhuang, Gansu.



甘肃武威的钟鼓楼

A bell and drum tower in Wuwei, Gansu.

汉朝把河西由游牧区改造成为农业区，在经济上有着十分重要的价值。一方面河西农业区不仅把中原与天山以南的老农业区连接了起来，

而且把中亚细亚的农业区也连接了起来，这就为丝路贸易畅通创造了条件。另一方面，在固定的农业区有驿站、旅店、城镇等设施，商贸往来和食宿方便又安全，还有可作为补充的物资进行贸易。所以，河西四郡的设置以及汉对河西的开发，对贸易走廊的形成在人力和物力上提供了保证。

甘肃敦煌阳关遗址烽火台。阳关建于公元前107年左右，从汉至唐一直是丝绸之路南道上的必经关隘。

A beacon tower of the ruins of Yangguan Pass in Dunhuang, Gansu. Built in about 107 BC, Yangguan Pass was a pass on the South Route of the Silk Road.

河西地区的经济发展和贸易走廊的逐步形成，大大密切了汉与西域的关系，促进了中西间的经济、文化交流。当时，西域各国派遣使者来汉朝纳贡者络绎不绝。这些纳贡的使者，在路过河西时住住得到同族人的接待。其中有些人因种种原因不能回国而留在了河西，或参与汉朝军政，或自谋生计。由于他们通晓不同语言，便成了汉与西域联系的纽带、中西经济文化交流的中介。中原的丝织品、治铁、铸造、穿井等生产技术源源不断传入西域，为繁荣西域的社会经济起了一定作用。西域方面的良马、棉花、胡桃、苜蓿、葡萄等农产品也随之传入中原，丰富了中原人民的生活。所以，河西四郡的设置和贸易走廊的畅通，不仅巩固了西汉对边疆地区的统治，而且为丝绸之路的形成准备了条件。

河西四郡

武威郡的治所在甘肃省民勤县东北，那里水草丰茂，适和农耕和牧业。武威地广人稀，水草宜畜牧，这一带的牲畜也是天下有名。西汉的武威郡的治所，一方面继承了匈奴故居，另一方面又考虑到其边防作用，所以位置偏北。此后甚至到了唐朝，这里一直是河西地区的政治、经济、文化中心。

张掖位于河西走廊中心，它的意思是“断匈奴之臂，张中国之掖”。古代的张掖是重要的交通枢纽，不仅东西连接长安和西域，是丝绸之路上的一个大站，而且北通居延泽，连接通向漠北草原的大路，南通西羌的青藏高原地区。汉代张掖郡治旧址，可能就是今张掖西北的黑水国故城。张掖有丰富的水源，便于发展农业，自古以土地肥沃富足出名。

酒泉在汉代是个军事基地，城东有泉。据说当年汉武帝赐酒为霍去病庆功，酒少人多，无法分给大家，于是霍去病就将酒倒入泉中，与将士们一起喝，酒泉因此得名。汉朝的酒泉郡治是福禄城，在汉长城南，遗址没有保存下来。近代的酒泉城是明代（1368—1644）建筑，是在西晋（265—317）福禄城旧址的基础上修建的。酒泉在西汉经常驻有大量骑兵，汉朝大将李广利、赵充国攻打匈奴，都是从这儿出兵。

敦煌是四郡中最边远的一郡，也是丝绸之路南北两道的汇合处。由敦煌西行，出玉门关走北道，出阳关走南道。从西域来的客人踏上汉朝内地，第一座城市便是敦煌。汉代敦煌城在今甘肃敦煌县西南的党河西岸，是个长方形土城，东西宽718米，南北长1132米，残高16米。在丝绸之路的历史上，敦煌具有十分重要的地位，莫高窟的精美壁画和近代发现的万卷文书，使敦煌成为举世闻名的文化艺术宝库。

丝绸之路的繁荣

张骞出使西域，前后历时30余年。他谦逊诚恳，尊重他人，处处不失中国人的礼节，赢得了许多国家和民族的信任。由于长期艰苦跋涉、风餐露宿，他的健康受到了严重的损害。最后一次出使回到长安后，仅过一年多张骞就因病去世。但是，由他开拓的丝绸之路，开启了东西经

济文化交流的新时代。史书称他出使西域是一种“凿空”行动，意思是他第一个打开了西域的大门。历史将永远铭记这位勇敢而富有献身精神的探险家和外交家。

张骞雕像，陕西汉中城固县张骞纪念馆。
A sculpture of Zhang Qian in Zhang Qian Memorial in Chenggu County, Hanzhong City, Shaanxi Province.

往来于丝绸之路上的，除了各国使节外，更多的是从事贸易的商人，有的商人为通行方便还冒充使者身份。中国的丝绸在这些路线上频繁地运送，几经转辗，极有可能抵达远在地中海地区的目的地——虽然汉朝与罗马帝国之间没有直接的来往，但经过几十年的发展，围绕中国

丝绸出口已形成了一个贸易体系，其中不仅有中国，还有罗马、中亚、西亚、印度、印度尼西亚和非洲，罗马即是这条贸易路线的西端。这些贸易伙伴的交流，促成了欧亚大陆区域间的人员、物资往来，中国的丝绸运往西方，中亚人充当了运输人和向导，西亚人和非洲人则负责货物的储存和经营。中国从中亚取得了马匹、玉石和羊毛，罗马则获得中国的丝绸，以点缀元老院议员和贵族们的奢侈生活，同时也输入印尼的香料和印度的胡椒，他们为此支付铁制品、玻璃和金银。

汉代浮雕，牵着骆驼前往西域的商人。
A Han Dynasty relief sculpture of a merchant leading a camel on his way to the Western Region.

在航海尚不发达的古代，远程贸易主要在陆路上开拓和延伸，交易的路途短则数月，长则数年。丝绸之路正是一条漫长的商贸路线。往来于丝路上的商旅运载货物主要靠骆驼、马匹、毛驴、骡子等，其中尤以骆驼为主，一支大型的商队常常拥有数十峰甚至数百峰骆驼。在汉唐最繁荣时期，丝路上的商旅络绎不绝，大型的驼队和马队绵延相接，伴着

清脆悦耳的驼铃声，浩浩荡荡地穿越大漠戈壁，出没于绿洲之间。

络绎不绝的沙漠商旅
Merchants travelling in endless desert.

出产于西域和蒙古高原的双峰骆驼具有极强的载重能力，在翻越帕米尔高原和伊朗高原的远途运输上，充分发挥了沙漠之舟的作用。空前活跃的远程贸易，为丝路沿线的文明古国和城邦要塞带来了兴旺和繁荣，在长达1000多年的岁月中，穿着各式服装、肤色各异的商旅往来不绝，构成了沙漠丝路上最具风情的历史画卷。

敦煌莫高窟296窟壁画，描绘了古代丝绸之路上商旅往来的情景。
A mural painting of No.296 grotto of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, depicting the scene of businessmen's travel on the ancient Silk Road.

丝绸是商队通过丝路远销西方的主要物品，也是最受中亚、西亚、南亚、欧洲人欢迎的货物。一些西域国家随着丝绸贸易的日益兴盛而成为中转站，并积极参与丝绸的贩运。例如丝路南道与北道交汇处的疏勒（今新疆喀什），就是商队西越葱岭之前的重要集散地。又如善于经商的康居国，他们的商人成群结队地赶着骆驼，带着皮毛、香料等货物到长安换成丝绸，然后再贩运到伊朗和中亚等地。历史上地处中亚丝路要道上的安息，商业非常发达，是一个同汉朝贸易关系相当密切的大国，曾长期控制着中国同西方的丝绸贸易。位于地中海东岸地区的大秦，则是中国丝绸的最大消费国，为了打破安息对丝绸贸易的垄断，曾与安息发生多次战争，并试图寻找和开辟直接与中国交往的新途径。

西出长安前往西域的中国商队，是贩运输出丝绸的一支主力。汉朝派出的使节，往往就是官办的贸易队伍，庞大的驼队携带着大量的帛、黄金和牛羊。每年都有成批的使团，沿着丝路，经过长途跋涉，和远方的塞种人、大月氏人、波斯人、希腊人、印度人打交道，交换商货，沟

通关系。中国的商队在汉代就已到达中亚、西亚、南亚的许多国家，在阿姆河流域、里海北部、伊朗高原、北印度、美索不达米亚、叙利亚，以及地中海沿岸，都留下了他们的足迹。

汉朝出使安息的使者有很大的收获。安息国王听说汉武帝对条支大鸟卵和犁靬（罗马）眩人（魔术师）感兴趣，特地把宫廷里的鸵鸟蛋和几位犁靬魔术师作为礼物献给汉武帝。魔术师随同使者一起来到长安，并给汉武帝当场表演吞刀吐火、植瓜种树、屠人截马的把戏，汉武帝非常高兴，重赏安息使者，并把犁靬魔术师留在宫里。由于汉武帝的爱好，魔术很快在中国风行起来，而这几位魔术师，却再也没能回到自己的故乡。这是中国史书记载中第一次来中国的罗马人。

随着东西方的频繁往来，经济和文化的交流大大推动了社会和文明的发展。据统计，沿着丝绸之路输入西域国家的中国植物、矿产有20种，而西域国家传入中国的植物就有40多种。

IV

A New Era for Chinese and Foreign Exchange

Chang'an Brimming with Western Region Goods

Not long after the Wusun visitors had left Chang'an, the deputy envoys that Zhang Qian had sent out to various Western Region states while they were in Wusun began returning to Chang'an one after another. Each deputy envoy brought back many foreign visitors and rare foreign products. Along with them came visiting officials and children of noble families from many different countries, as well as plutocrats who came to conduct business. These foreigners with pronounced noses, blue eyes, and curly hair came riding in on horses and following alongside camels packed with goods. They poured into Chang'an in endless streams, providing the Han imperial court and the citizens of Chang'an with many new subjects of conversation.

The envoys arriving from different countries conveyed to Emperor Wu of Han the wishes of their kings to have friendly contact with the Han Dynasty, and they all brought rare products to present to him. The State of Dayuan gave him famous Hanxue horses. Emperor Wu had heard Zhang Qian speak of the origins and strengths of this breed of horse, and was naturally delighted to see one with his own eyes. He could not wait to go to the imperial hunting park to try out riding one for himself. He felt that this kind of horse was even better than the Wusun horse, and decided to call the Dayuan horse "heavenly horse" and call the Wusun horse "western extremity horse" instead.

Emperor Wu of Han was a ruler who paid attention to and

absorbed the strong points of every country in order to develop China's own economy and culture. In the imperial park west of Chang'an where he could hunt for pleasure, Emperor Wu built a unique imperial palace in which to stay when he was away from the palace in Chang'an. It was made of crystal, which is itself a product of Chinese and foreign cultural exchange. The stone lions at the gate were carved to look like Parthian lions. Painted on the screen inside the palace was an Indian peacock spreading its tail feathers. The chairs and tea tables were inlaid with Hotan jade. The ostrich egg from Parthia was on display in the palace, as was a crystal platter from the State of Qiantu. The platter contained ice cubes, and it was so glittering and translucent that one could not tell where the platter ended and the ice began. Incense like storax and alder were burning on the stove next to the crystal platter, and their spirit-lifting scents floated into the palace hall.

In the garden near the palace, grapes from Dayuan grew in abundance on frames, lush and green. Alfalfa covered the ground along the sides of a small path. Not far down the path was a circular wall made of granite. Inside was the zoo, in addition to the animals bred in the Han Empire such as tigers, leopards, bears, and snakes were kept, there were also rare birds and beasts from various Western Region states. Elephants roamed around inside in twos and threes, and camels serenely lay in the sun. In another corner was a row of large iron cages with lions, ferocious dogs, and other beasts of prey. Next to the cages was the birdhouse, where a peacock lugged its beautiful tail back and forth across a terrace covered in green grass. An ostrich held its head high, looking about in all directions. In a large cage next to a pond, countless birds of all different colors fluttered about. They all made different sounds, as if they were in a competition to see who could best show off their homeland.

苜蓿

A clover.

Other palace rooms were also full of treasures from different places. The imperial stable was full of Wusun horses, Ferghana horses, and other good breeds of horses called "*pushao*," "*longwen*," and "*yumu*." The clothing worn by the emperor and his empress and concubines had bright, shiny pearls sewn on them. Their belts and hats were decorated with tortoise shell, rhinoceros horn, elephant's tusk, jadeite, and agate. Music and musical instruments from the Western Region had also made their way into the Han palace. Emperor Wu of Han's personal musician Li Yannian composed twenty-eight new songs in the Hu music style, and performed them with an orchestra in the palace. The exotic sounds of the *konghou* harp, *pipa*, *hujia* flute, and *bili* pipe were heard across the Central Plains area, in a performance of wild and bold music that had never been heard there before.

But it was not just the Han palace that gained from the economic and cultural exchanges. Many things that had a huge impact on the lives of ordinary people came to the Central Plains as a result as well. In addition to the grapes and clover mentioned above, pomegranates from the Iranian highlands were also brought to grow in Chang'an, where, under the favorable natural conditions of places such as Lintong and Huaiyuan, a new variety developed, which is still a

famous Chinese product to this day. Foods that the Han people had never seen before such as sesame seeds, lima beans, carrots, onions, garlic, walnuts, and cucumbers were also first transplanted in Gansu and Shaanxi, and then spread to vast regions until they became foods commonly found on dining tables across China. Apart from that, items such as glass, wool fabric, precious stones, and medicines quickly made their way across the empire. The saying goes that women are like "Lantian jade on the head and Roman Empire pearls behind the ears." People gave each other gems from Parthia and pearls from the Roman Empire as precious gifts. Foreign plants and minerals like jasmine, garden balsam, asafoetida, galbanum, gallnuts, indigo, golden peaches, monkshood, picked mustard tubers, spinach, caster-oil plants, narcissus, watermelon, mustard greens, figs, apricots, alilei, fennel, hunti onions, and Abosan all began spreading across China around this time.

The process of Roman glue being introduced to and becoming known in China was rather complicated. It was a kind of powerful glue made of bone tissue used for fixing broken bows and swords. Once the glue had been applied, even if other parts of the weapon broke, the part that had been glued together would remain intact. For this reason, the glue was called "second marriage after the first wife's death." In the year 98 BC, the Roman Empire sent representatives to the Han Dynasty. They brought gifts of two kilograms of glue, which was emerald green in color. Given that it wasn't actually a gem, Emperor Wu had it taken away, not knowing for what it was used. The Roman envoy still remained. After a short period of time, Emperor Wu went to the forest to shoot tigers. Suddenly, the string on his bow broke. The Roman envoy behind him offered the glue to him once more. When mixed with saliva, the glue mended the string. Emperor Wu was greatly surprised, and had several palace guards pull on the string together, but it did not break. Emperor Wu now understood the extraordinary power of the glue, and rewarded the envoy with gifts of cinnamon, ginger, and other items that the West

did not have yet, and sent them home. The Han Dynasty seemed to have a good understanding of the famous Roman fragrance storax, and even used it in the palace. The foreign envoy had also given Emperor Wu of Han three pellets of a fragrance like jujube. At first, Emperor Wu did not give the fragrances much thought, but after the envoy went home, the scent of the fragrance pellets suddenly floated through the air, and remained for a long time.

Frequent commercial exchanges also spread the highly advanced Han culture to the Western Region. Well-known Chinese products that were introduced to the West included lacquer and bamboo ware, copper money, ginger, cinnamon, rhubarb, and China root. Of course, the most important of all were silk, iron, and ironware.

Han Dynasty techniques for metal casting and well drilling also spread to Central Asia in this way. The State of Dayuan did not possess knowledge of metal casting technology, and did not learn about it until a Han envoy and soldiers took refuge with them and taught them. Once Dayuan had learned the art of metal smelting, not only did they cast new weapons, but also tools for crop production. They gradually replaced their copper and wooden plows with ones made of iron. Emperor Wu of Han once sent Li Guangli to attack Dayuan. Li Guangli had Dayuan completely surrounded. At that time, Dayuan's water supply came from outside the city, and so Li Guangli cut off the supply. Later he was told that a Han person had taught them to dig wells, and it was only when he learnt this and that they still had plenty of food that he agreed to negotiate. It is certain that the Dayuan benefited much from learning from China how to drill a well in the ground during that war, which proves that this technology was extremely valuable for use in both crop production and everyday life there.

Caesar's Silk Gown

After Zhang Qian went on his missions to the Western Region and pioneered the Silk Road, and after he sent the deputy envoys to Bactria and Parthia in particular, that which had previously hindered long-distance transportation was broken down. Chinese silk was continually delivered to the Western Region, Central Asia, and countries in Southwest Asia by emissaries and merchants. After some time, Western Region states and Parthia began serving as brokers for silk trade. They transported silk to Rome, making huge profits in the process.

Rome, previously referred to above, was established in the 6th century BC. Originally, its territory was limited to what is today the Italian peninsula. Later, it gradually expanded into a great empire stretching across the European, Asian, and African continents. It was a powerful ancient western nation with a highly developed economy and culture. Prior to the opening of the Silk Road, Rome and China were like strangers in distant lands to each other. They did not understand one another, each one thinking of the other as a marvelous place or a strange and mysterious paradise. The Romans thought that silk was made of tree fibers, and that good drinking water made Chinese people able to live for two or three hundred years. In contrast, Chinese people thought that the Romans were just like them, also able to raise silkworms and like them in appearance, so they referred to the Roman Empire as "Da Qin," or "Great Qin."

The Romans were avid lovers of Chinese silk. The members of the upper echelons of Roman society—the officials and the aristocrats—thought of silk as a rare treasure. Whoever wore silk clothing was the envy of everyone around him. The price of silk rose tenfold all at once. It is said that one time the Roman Caesar wore a robe made of Chinese silk to the theater. It created such a sensation that the entire audience kept their eyes on him, rather than on the stage, everyone turning around to see the luxurious robe that Caesar was wearing, which was like nothing they had ever seen before. Everyone praised this new kind of material, and before long, wearing silk became

fashionable in Rome.

As the demand for silk in Rome increased, so did the price. Silk merchants from various countries became rich, and formed enormous trade caravans. Year after year, they made the long and arduous journey crossing over the mountains, deserts, canyons, and plateaus to take jewels and spices from the West to China, and then transporting silk back to the West. In its natural state, the world has no roads; they are gradually formed by many people going the same way. That is exactly how the famous Silk Road came to be.

As soon as the uniquely exquisite Chinese silk had been exported, it immediately enjoyed high acclaim across the world, becoming immensely popular. The well-known Indian *Laws of Manu* states that, as punishment, anyone who stole silk would be only be allowed to drink milk for three days, and in their next life, they would come back as a partridge.

坎儿井
A kariz.

Advanced Chinese techniques for crop production also entered the Central Asian area via the Silk Road. After the famous Western Han irrigation system based on connected wells spread into Central Asia, it took on its most famous form, a hydraulic "hidden well" system. The

Persians called this "kariz," which was a transliteration of the Chinese word for it, *kan'er*. Other Chinese products also began entering the Western Region one after another, such as peaches, apricots, plums, tea, ginger, dark plums, cinnamon bark, tung oil, alum, granulated sugar, cinnamon, baishu herbs, rhubarb, China root, birch, mangoes, bodhi seeds, hollyhock, sandalwood, and ceramic clay. In the Indian languages, the names for many of these things included the word "Chinese." For example, the name for silk in ancient India was "Chinese cloth" or "Chinese clothing." Pear trees were called "Chinese princes" and peanuts were called "Chinese almonds." To this day, some areas in northern India call porcelain "Chinese soil."

Han officials and merchants formed a team one hundred strong, with one group after another going to the Western Region to engage in trade, selling silk to faraway places. They also took advanced techniques for making paper, smelting iron, and digging wells to various states there. In this way, Han silk reached Parthia through the Western Region, and the Parthians then transported it to the Roman Empire. The price per *jin* (five hundred grams) of silk increased more than tenfold, making it worth more than a *jin* of gold. The rich and powerful all took pride in wearing silk clothing.

In the year 14 BC, which was the last year of the reign of Augustus (i. e. Octavian, 63 BC-14 AD), the trend for Roman noblemen to wear silk clothing became problematic. Since Rome could not produce their own silk, and also could not obtain silk directly from the East, they had no choice but to buy it from the Parthian merchants for an exorbitant price. The price for a bolt of silk was the same as that of gold of equal weight. The huge demand for silk was quickly depleting Rome's gold reserve, and the national treasury was nearly empty. Pliny also wrote an article condemning transparent clothing: "Women love wearing silk garments in public settings so as to reveal their bodies, and it is ruining society." The senate also issued an order that prohibited men from wearing silk clothing. These debates, however, were to no avail. A market

exclusively for selling Chinese silk opened in Rome. A Roman historian even declared in the 4th century, "In the past, only the noblemen of my country could wear silk. Now, it is common for people of all levels in society to wear it, and even porters and errand boys are no exception."

Their passionate inclination toward silk aroused an intense curiosity among the Romans: How is this exquisite silk woven? Where is it produced? They did not believe that the Parthians were capable of making anything so exquisite. But apart from Parthia, Romans had almost no knowledge of faraway China. They fantasized and surmised, coming up with all sorts of mythical stories about China. Knowing nothing of the origins of silk, Romans called it "the yarn of Seres." The name "Seres" came from a Greek writer, who made it up entirely based on hearsay, which means "the land of silk." The writer claimed that the people of Seres resided in the eastern fringes of the territory conquered by Alexander the Great, a place at the edge of the world, where no person from the West had ever stepped foot before.

The Greek and Roman civilizations were already highly advanced in that era, and produced many great politicians, philosophers, writers, and artists. The great Roman Empire army ruled over Eurasia, and possessed first-class maritime technology. With such a love for silk, why didn't they scout out an eastern route that would allow them to access China directly?

There were two factors blocking the lines between East and West in those days. One was the presence of countless pirates on the Mediterranean Sea who made countless attacks on merchant ships. Eventually, these sea desperados rendered merchant ships unable to travel long distances, so sailing all the way to India or even China to conduct trade was out of the question. The second factor was Parthia, where silk sold to Rome came from. Acting as silk brokers brought great profits to Parthia. Parthia maintained good relations with the Han Dynasty, and Han silk was constantly entering Parthia. With Rome, however, Parthia was on hostile military terms, so they were

unwilling to allow China to direct trade access to Rome, as that would cut into their profits. For these reasons, silk was always traded through a middleman. No Roman or Chinese was able to successfully cross the tens of thousands of *li* to reach the other empire's capital.

When Chinese silkworms and methods for raising silkworms were passed to Europe, it was already later than the 6th century. Prior to that time, people in the West could not raise silkworms or reel silk, but they could weave raw silk transported from China into fabric. The process was completed in one of the two ways. Either they would unravel the transported *juan* into threads, add some flaxen thread to it, weave it into fabric, and then dye the fabric and add embroidery, or they would dye white silk and add gold embroidery. After the silk had been processed for the second time, they could sell it to countries across Europe. The silk processing industry for the Roman Empire at the time was centered in Syrian cities such as Tyre and Beirut.

The exact time that Chinese silkworm eggs and the Chinese method for raising silkworm was finally introduced to the capital of Roman Empire Constantinople was in the year 552 AD, when Justinian was the reigning emperor. Eastern Romans were thereupon able to master the technique of silk production, and an imperial silk weaving factory opened in Constantinople, where large numbers of female workers engaged in silk production. This gave Constantinople a monopoly over silk production and trade in Eastern Rome as well as a monopoly on the silk production and manufacturing technology in all of Europe. In the middle of the 12th century, during the second crusades, the Italian King of Sicily Roger II (reigned 1127-1154) invaded the Byzantine Palace and carried away nearly two thousand silk weavers to southern Italy. Italy then began producing silk, and after the 13th century, silk production techniques began spreading to western European countries such as Spain, France, England, and Germany. Silk production had spread extensively across Europe.

4

中外交流的新纪元

西域方物满长安

乌孙客人离开长安不久，张骞在乌孙国时派到西域各国去的副使们陆陆续续回到长安。每个副使都带来了不少外国客人，也带来了许多外国的珍奇物产。随他们同来的，有各国来汉朝观光的官员和贵族子弟，还有来做生意的富商大贾。这些高鼻子、蓝眼睛、满头鬈发的外国人，骑着骏马，赶着满载货物的驼队，络绎不绝地涌进长安城，给汉家朝廷和长安百姓增添了不少新鲜话题。

汉画像砖：西汉长安（今陕西西安）市井商业图。
A Han Dynasty brick relief: a picture of the marketplace in Chang'an of the Western Han Dynasty (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi).

各国使臣向汉武帝转达了本国君王同汉朝友好往来的愿望，而且都带来了珍奇物产献给武帝。大宛国赠送的是著名的汗血马，汉武帝早就听张骞讲过这种马的来历和好处，这次亲眼见到，当然非常开心。他急不可待地到上林苑亲自试骑了一番，感觉比乌孙马还要好，于是，他决

定把大宛马叫做天马，乌孙马改叫西极马。

唐三彩骆驼商俑

A Tang period tri-coloured pottery of camel merchant.

汉武帝是一个很注意吸收各国长处，以发展中国自身经济、文化的统治者。他在长安以西的上林苑（用来打猎娱乐的皇家林苑）修了一座别致的离宫，这座离宫本身就是中外文化交流的结晶。离宫门口的石狮子，是按照安息狮子的样子雕成的。离宫殿内的屏风，画着开屏的印度孔雀，椅子和茶几嵌上了和田玉石。宫里陈列着安息鸵鸟蛋以及千涂国的水晶盘子，水晶盘里盛着冰块，晶莹透彻，简直分不清哪是盘哪是冰。水晶盘旁边的炉里燃着苏合香、兜木香等各种香料，殿堂里飘浮着

沁人肺腑的幽香。

汗血宝马
A Ferghana horse.

在宫殿附近的苑圃里，一架架大宛葡萄长得枝繁叶茂，青翠欲滴；小路两旁，遍地是一簇簇紫花苜蓿，十分茂盛。沿着小路向前走不远，有一圈用巨大花岗石砌成的围墙，这是动物园。里面除了养着汉朝产的虎豹熊蛇外，还有许多西域各国赠送的珍禽异兽：大象三三两两地在里面散步，骆驼安详地俯卧着晒太阳。在另一个角落里，一字排列着好几个大铁笼，那里面关着狮子、猛犬等一类猛兽。在兽园旁边有一处饲养鸟的地方。绿草如茵的地坪上，孔雀拖着美丽的长尾在徘徊，鸵鸟昂着头四下张望。水池旁的大笼子里，无数五颜六色的鸟儿在蹦蹦跳跳，它们的鸣声各不相同，好像在争先恐后地夸说自己的家乡。

在其他的宫殿里，也到处充满着来自异域的珍宝物产。皇家马厩拴满了乌孙马、汗血马和那些名叫“蒲梢”、“龙文”、“鱼目”的良种马。皇帝和后妃们的衣服上缀着熠熠发光的明珠，衣带和帽子上镶嵌着玳瑁、犀角、象牙、翡翠、玛瑙等制成的饰物。西域的乐器和乐曲也传进了汉宫，汉武帝的乐师李延年，根据胡曲创作新乐28首，在宫廷乐队里演奏。从此，在中原地区也响起了箜篌、琵琶、胡笳、觱篥的带有异国情调的声音，演奏出前所未有的粗犷豪放的乐曲。

葡萄
Grapes.

在经济、文化交流中得到收益的也并不仅仅是汉朝宫廷，许多对寻常百姓的生活产生巨大影响的东西也随着这股浪潮流进了中原。除了上面提到的葡萄、苜蓿以外，故乡在伊朗高原的石榴也在汉朝长安正式安家落户，并且在自然条件得天独厚的临潼、怀远等地形成了新的优良品种，直到现在仍然是中国的名产之一。汉地人民从来没有见过的芝麻、蚕豆、豌豆、胡萝卜、葱、大蒜、核桃、黄瓜，也首先移植到甘肃和陕西，接着又传播到其他更广大的地区，成为中国人餐桌上常见的蔬菜。此外还有玻璃、呢绒、宝石、药剂等也很快传播进来。妇女是“头上蓝田玉，耳后大秦珠”，而产于安息的宝石和产于大秦的明月珠，则是人们相互赠送的珍贵礼物。外国的植物、矿物如茉莉、指甲花、阿魏、白松香、五倍子、靛青、金桃、附子、榨菜、菠菜、蓖麻、水仙、西瓜、芥菜、无花果、巴旦杏、阿黎勒、小茴香、浑提葱、阿勃参也在此后相继传入了中国。

经营桂皮的商家
A merchant selling cinnamon.

罗马胶传入中国并被认识，则经过了一番曲折过程。这种胶是一种优质骨质胶，能粘接折断的弓和刀剑，接续之后，即使其他地方折断，续接的地方也照样不断，所以被称作续弦胶。公元前98年，罗马帝国派使者来到汉朝，献上四两胶，胶的颜色青如碧玉，然而武帝以为不是什么宝贝，就让人收起来，却不知胶的功用，留下使者没走。过了一阵子，武帝到华林园射老虎，忽然弓箭的弦断了，跟在后面的罗马使者，又献上这种胶，胶上粘了口水将弦接好。武帝大吃一惊，于是让几个武士一起来拉这把弓，始终不断。武帝这才明白胶的妙用，于是用牡桂、干姜等西方没有的物品重赏使者，并送他回国。对罗马的著名香料——苏合香，汉代似乎有着较多的了解，并在宫廷之中使用。外国使节向汉

武帝献过三枚如枣的香丸，汉武帝起初并没有重视，后来等使节回国后，香丸忽然飘出香气，过了很长时间也不停息。

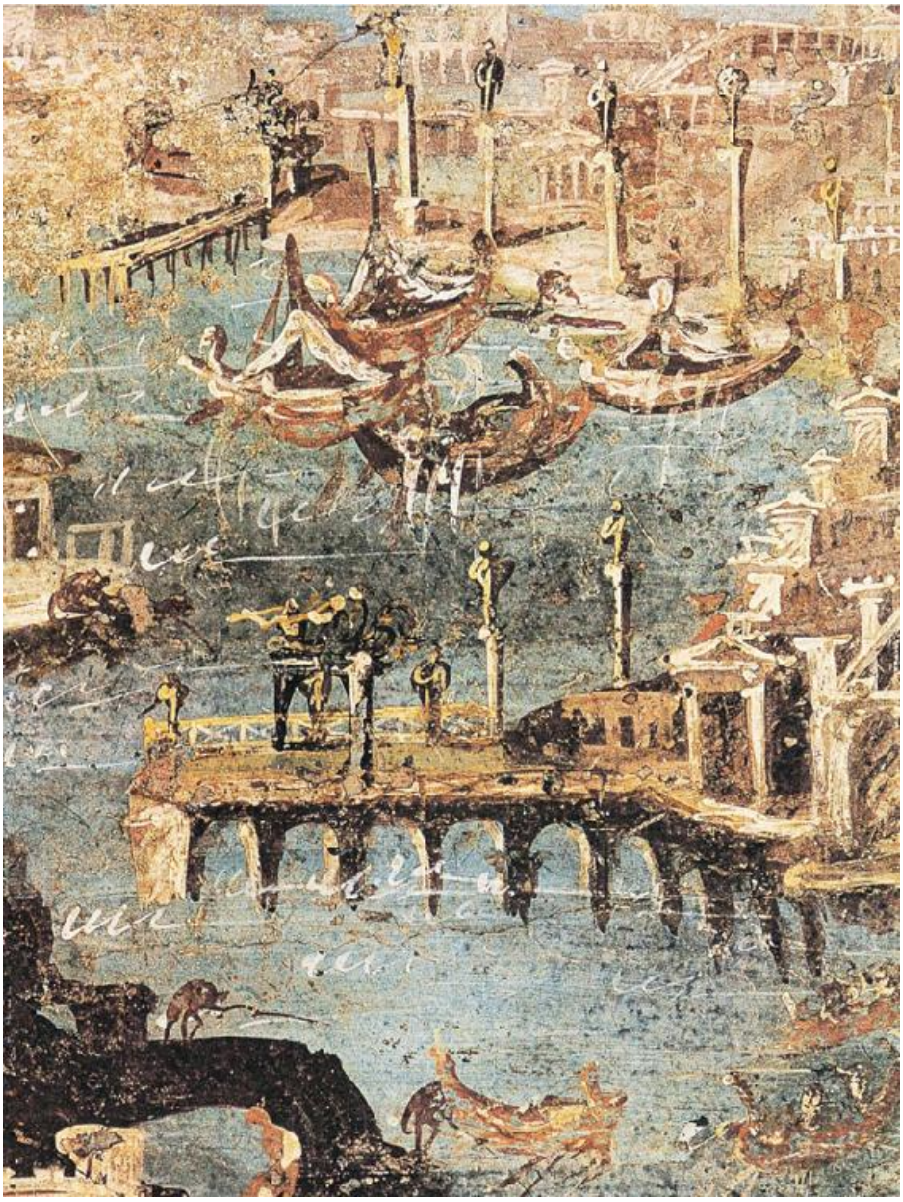
在频繁的贸易往来中，高度发展的汉文化也传到了西域。中国西传的著名产品有漆器、竹器、铜钱、生姜、肉桂、大黄、土茯苓，当然最重要的还是丝绸、铁和铁器。

汉朝的冶金铸造技术和打井技术也由此传到了中亚。大宛国原来是不知道冶金铸造技术的，直到投奔过去的汉使和士兵教他们铸作兵器，才开始这样做。大宛学得了冶铸术，不仅铸造了新的兵器，还铸造了生产用具，他们的铜犁、木犁随之也逐渐改为铁犁。汉武帝派李广利进攻大宛国，把它团团围住。大宛本来用的都是城外流水，李广利就断水围困。后来听说有汉人教他们学会了穿井，而且粮食还很多，他才同意讲和。在此次战争中，大宛无疑得益于从中国学会了地下穿井的技术，也由此证明这项技术对那里的生产、生活都是极为有用的。

恺撒的丝绸长袍

张骞出使西域、开拓丝路之后，特别是他派遣的副使到达大夏、安息以后，一向被阻断的东西交通长途被凿通了。大批中国丝绸通过使者、商人的传递，源源不断运送到西域、中亚以及西亚各国，西域各国和安息在很长时期内充当了丝绸贸易的中间商，把丝绸贩运到罗马去，从中取得巨额利润。

罗马就是我们在前面提到过的那个犛靬国。它在公元前6世纪建国，起初的版图只限于今天的意大利半岛，后来逐渐发展成为横跨欧、亚、非三洲的大帝国，是古代西方经济、文化都高度发达的一个强国。在丝路开通前，罗马和中国彼此并不了解，只是把对方想象成一个美妙的地方，一块奇特而神秘的乐土。罗马人以为丝绸是用树的纤维织成的，以为善饮水的中国人能活到两三百岁。相反，中国人则把罗马人看得和自己一样，也会种桑养蚕，长相也与中国人类似，并因此称罗马为“大秦”。



古罗马壁画：落下风帆的古罗马船只停泊在港湾中，古罗马通过水路来获得中国的丝绸、亚洲的香料。

An ancient Roman mural painting: ancient roman boats with wind sails down berthed in a harbor. The ancient Rome obtained Chinese silk and Asian spice through water route.

罗马人是中国丝绸的狂热爱好者，那里的达官富豪、贵族名媛，都把丝绸看作稀世珍宝，谁要是能穿上一件丝绸衣裳，就会引起周围人们

的极大羡慕，顿时身价十倍。据说罗马的恺撒大帝，有一次穿着中国丝绸做成的袍子去看戏，结果全场轰动，观众们不再观看舞台上的表演，纷纷转过身来凝视着恺撒大帝的那件空前豪华的衣裳，所有人都赞叹不已。很快，穿丝绸服装在罗马成为一种时尚。

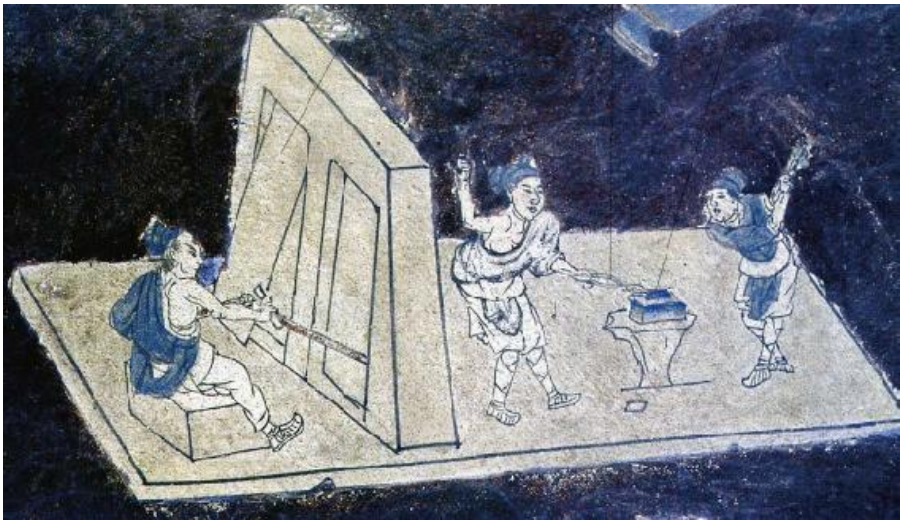
罗马对丝绸的需求越来越大，价钱也出得很高。于是，受财富鼓舞的各国商人，就组成巨大的商队，越过千山万水，年复一年地奔波在高山、大漠、峡谷、高原之中，把西方的珍宝、香料运到中国，再把换得的丝绸源源运到西方。世界上本是没有路的，走的人多了，渐渐地就成了路。丝绸之路是这祥一条著名的路。

精美绝伦的中国丝织品一经输出，立刻享有崇高的国际声誉，受到了热烈的欢迎。印度著名的《摩奴法典》规定；谁要偷丝，谁就要被罚三天内只准喝牛奶，来生就要成为一只鹧鸪。

西汉玉器：龙凤佩。

A Western Han Dynasty jade article: a dragon and phoenix pendant.

中国人民先进的生产技术也沿着丝绸之路进入了中亚一带。西汉著名的“坎儿井”传入中亚以后，形成了其最著名的水利工程“暗井系”。波斯人把这种暗井系称为“Kariz”，这就是“坎儿”的音译。中国的特产如桃、杏、李、茶叶、干姜、乌梅、桂皮、桐油、白矾、沙糖、肉桂、白术、大黄、土茯苓、桦树、芒果、无患子、蜀葵、檀香、高岭土等也相继传入了西域。在印度的语言文字中，有很多物品的名称都带有“中国”意思。如印度古代把丝织品叫做“中国布”或“中国衣”；把樟脑叫做“中国樟脑”；把铅叫做“中国板子”；把梨树叫做“中国王子”；把花生叫做“中国杏仁”。直到现在，印度北方一些地区还把瓷器叫做“中国泥土”。



敦煌壁画：西夏冶铁图，中国现有最早的木风箱冶铁图之一。
A Dunhuang mural painting: a picture of smelting iron of the Western Xia Dynasty, one of the earliest existent pictures of melting iron with wooden bellows in China.

汉朝的官员和商人也组成了成百人的队伍，一批接着一批前往西域各国贸易，把丝绸销售到很远的地方去，也把造纸、炼铁、打井等先进技术传到西域各国。就这样，汉朝的丝绸，经过西域，到了安息，安息人又把它转运到罗马帝国。当时，在汉朝首都，一斤上等丝绸只卖一两黄金，而在罗马，一斤丝绸的价格就提高了十多倍，要值一斤多黄金，贵族、富豪都以穿丝绸衣服为骄傲。

屋大维雕像
A sculpture of Octavian.

到了公元前14年，也就是奥古斯都（即屋大维，前63—公元14）执政的最后一年，罗马贵族穿丝绸衣服的风尚变成了一种公害。因为罗马既不能生产也不能直接从东方获得丝绸，只能从安息商人手中购买，昂贵得惊人，一匹丝绸的价格与其重量相等的黄金相当。巨大的需求迅速消耗着罗马的黄金储备，国库即将空虚。普林尼写文章非难这种透明衣料：妇女爱在社交场合穿上丝质薄衣，以致呈现裸体，败坏了社会风气。元老院也发出命令，禁止男人穿丝绸服装。但这些议论都无济于事。罗马城内还开设了专售中国丝绢的市场。4世纪时，一位罗马史学家甚至宣称：“过去我国仅贵族才能穿着丝服，现在则各阶层人民都普遍穿用，连搬运夫和公差也不例外。”

对丝绸狂热的偏爱让罗马人产生了强烈的好奇心：精美的丝绸是怎样织成的？它是在哪个地方生产的？他们并不认为安息人会造出如此精美的东西。但除了安息，罗马人对遥远的中国几乎一无所知，幻想和猜测产生了种种神话传说。由于不知道丝绸的来历，罗马人就称其为“赛里斯国的纱”。“赛里斯”这个名词由一位希腊作家根据道听途说首创，意为“丝国”。他指出，赛里斯人居住在过去由亚历山大所征服的领地的东部边缘，在世界尽头的某个地方，西方任何人都未曾亲身抵达过。

在那个时代，希腊与罗马文明已经高度发达，产生了许多伟大的政治家、哲学家、文学家和艺术家，罗马帝国的强大军队称雄欧亚，还有一流的航海技术。他们既然这样喜爱丝绸，为什么不向东方去探索一条直达中国的通道呢？

当时有两个障碍阻挡了东方和西方的沟通。一个是地中海多如牛毛的海盗，他们专门袭击来往商船。在很长时间内，这些海上亡命徒迫使商船无法远行，更谈不上去印度乃至中国进行远洋贸易了。第二，罗马的丝绸来自安息，这种转手贸易使安息获得了巨大利润。安息与汉朝保持着良好关系，汉朝的丝绸源源不断进入安息。而安息又在军事上与罗马处于敌对状态，不愿意让中国与罗马直接贸易，损失自己的利益。因此，丝绸贸易一直是转手交易，没有一个罗马人或中国人能顺利地走上几万里，到达对方的首都。

至于中国的蚕种和养蚕法传入欧洲的时间，则是在公元6世纪以后了。在此之前，西方人不会养蚕缫丝，却可以把中国运来的生丝加工纺织；或是将运来的绢缯拆解成丝线，掺上麻线，织成纱绫，再染色、绣花；或是把素绢染上色，加绣金线，这样再把二次加工后的丝绸销往东

西欧各国。当时叙利亚的泰尔、贝鲁特等城市就是当时东罗马帝国加工型丝织业的中心。

中国的蚕种和养蚕法传入东罗马帝国的首都君士坦丁堡的确切时间是公元552年，适逢查士丁尼皇帝在位。从此，东罗马人掌握了蚕丝生产技术，君士坦丁堡也出现了庞大的皇家丝织工场，有大批女工从事丝绸生产，君士坦丁堡还因此独占了东罗马的丝绸制造和贸易，并垄断了欧洲的蚕丝生产和纺织技术。直到12世纪中叶，十字军第二次东征，南意大利西西里王罗哲儿二世（1127—1154年在位）从拜占廷抢来2000名丝织工人，将他们安置在南意大利。此后，意大利开始生产丝绸，13世纪以后，养蚕织丝技术陆续传至西班牙、法国、英国、德国等西欧国家，丝绸生产在欧洲广泛传播开来。

图书在版编目（CIP）数据

丝绸之路的开通：汉英对照 / 张一平著；译谷译．—北京：五洲传播出版社，2010.1
ISBN 978-7-5085-1709-4

I．①丝… II．①张… ②译… III．①丝绸之路—汉、英 IV．①K928.6

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字（2009）第192597号

中外文化交流故事丛书（Roads to the World）

总策划：许 琳
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出版人：荆孝敏 邓锦辉
编著者：王硕丰
翻 译：译 谷
项目统筹：邓锦辉
责任编辑：覃田甜
设计指导：田 林
封面绘画：李 骐
图 片：FOTOE CFP

丝绸之路的开通
The Opening of the Silk Road

出版发行　五洲传播出版社（北京市海淀区北小马厂6号　邮编：100038）
电　　话　8610-58891281（发行部）
网　　址　www.cicc.org.cn
版　　次　2010年1月第1版

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Zhang Qian, an explorer in the Han Dynasty, adventured to the Western Region twice and opened the worldly-renowned Silk Road. Zhang Qian was the first to open the gate to the Western Region, and the Silk Road that he pioneered ushered in a new era in economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West. This brave and dedicated explorer and diplomat has made a permanent mark on the history of Sino-foreign cultural exchange.

中国汉代的张骞两次出使西域，打通举世闻名的丝绸之路。他第一个打开了西域的大门，由他开拓的丝绸之路，揭开了东西经济文化交流的新时代。这位勇敢而富有献身精神的探险家和外交家书写了中西文化交流史上最生动传奇的一页。